Dec. 3 Fiftieth Year: 1882-1932

ARGOSY

WEEKLY

10¢

THE BAND OF DEATH

by Fred MacIsaac

Craig Kennedy in "Murder on the Mike"

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ARGOSY

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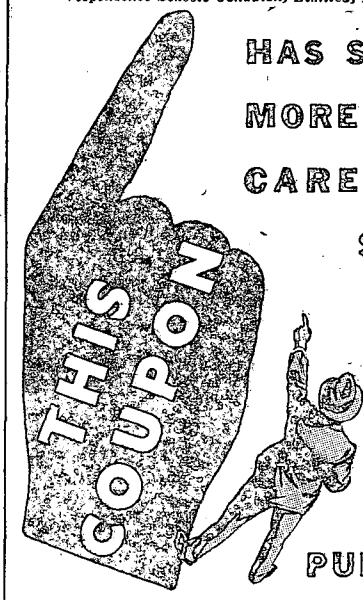

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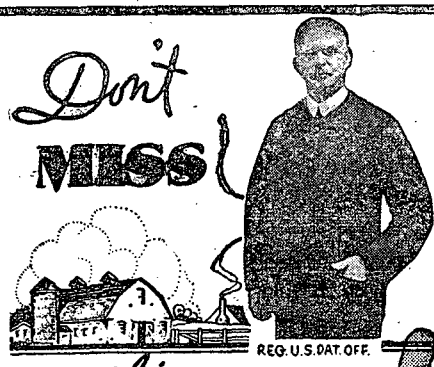

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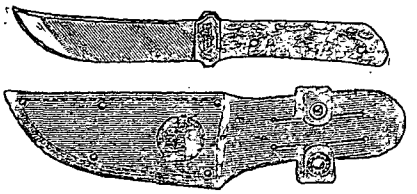

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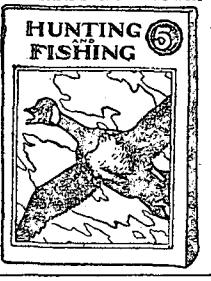

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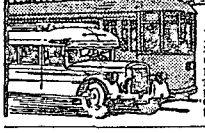

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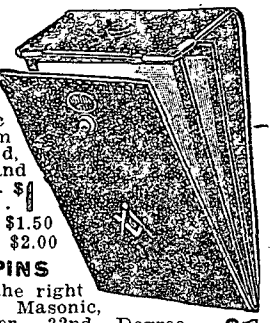

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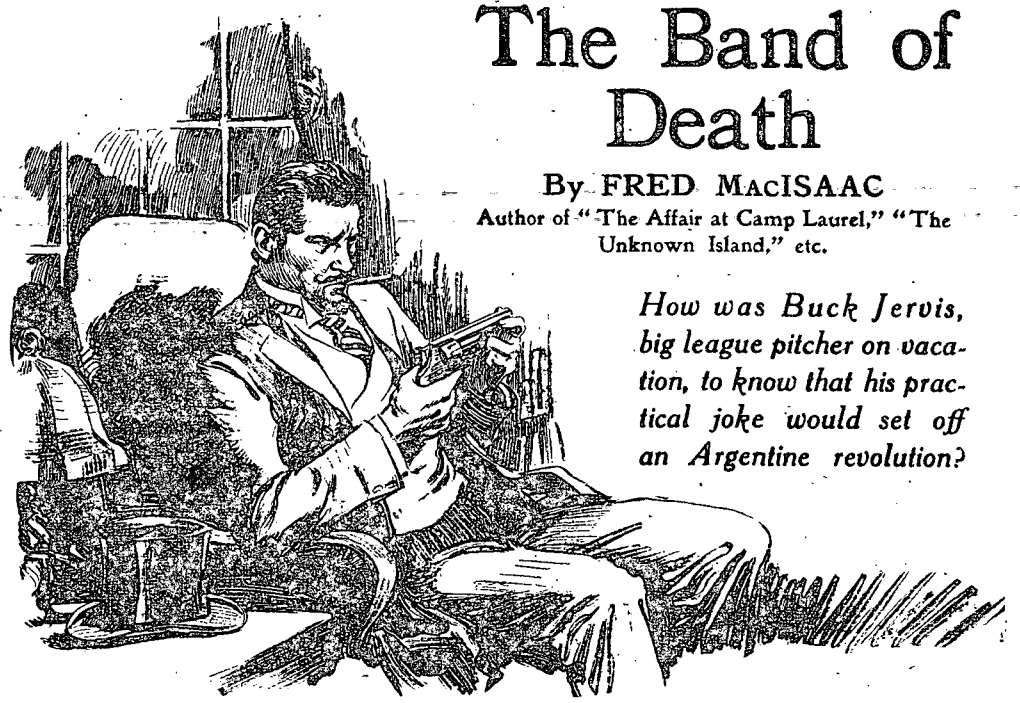
VOLUME 234 SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3, 1932 NUMBER 4

The Band of Death

By FRED MACISAAC

Author of "The Affair at Camp Laurel," "The Unknown Island," etc.

How was Buck Jervis, big league pitcher on vacation, to know that his practical joke would set off an Argentine revolution?



CHAPTER I.

THE APPLE OF DISCORD.

YOU heard of me and, if you ever went up to the Yankee Stadium, you seen me; Buck "Bombshell" Jervis, the greatest left handed pitcher—or right handed either—now playing the game. But you probably never heard of Richard Van Hooven, who has bats in his belfry but is a very swell guy. Well, I took a season off from the Yankees because they tried to slice a hunk off my salary, and I went down to this Argentine Republic and made one pitch that knocked out the government they had and made Revolution triumphant, as they said, and if they keep their promises they will have statues of me put up in all the prominent places down there.

How did I get there? This Van Hooven was responsible. I'll tell you all about it and how I'm supposed to be his secretary when writing gives me a cramp in the old left soupbone. And, if it wasn't for these dictating machines, you bet I wouldn't be writing this book.

Anyway, Dick and I have just come

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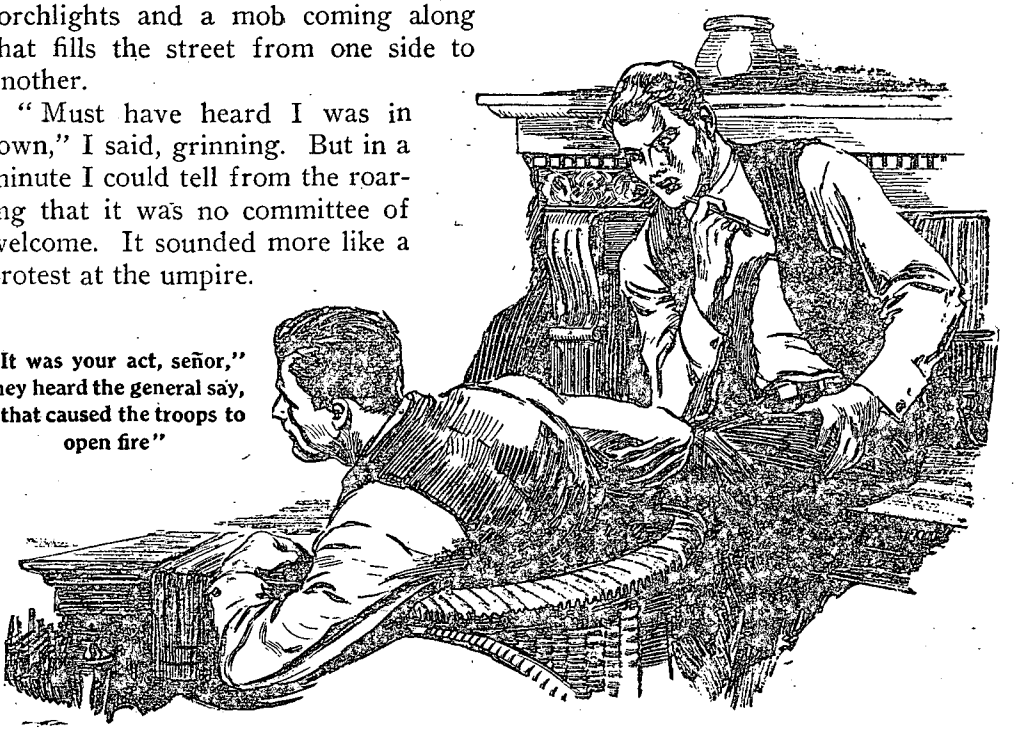
off the boat and we're sitting in our suite in the Avenida Palace Hotel in Buenos Aires when we hear a rumbling in the distance, it being about nine o'clock in the evening. Dick and me stick our heads out our window and away up the Avenida de Mayo we see torchlights and a mob coming along that fills the street from one side to another.

"Must have heard I was in town," I said, grinning. But in a minute I could tell from the roaring that it was no committee of welcome. It sounded more like a protest at the umpire.



"It was your act, señor," they heard the general say, "that caused the troops to open fire"

Dick grabs the phone and talks Spanish to the operator. When she had told him all about it he came back with a look in his eye like the time he tried to jump off the ocean liner to prove you could do it without getting chewed by the propeller.

"A student demonstration against the government," he said. "They're coming down to the Government Palace across the plaza to raise hell."

"Maybe we better move," I said, uneasy. "We're pretty close."

"Sure we'll move," says this nut. "We'll move into the demonstration. All it needs to be a success is us."

"Listen, you big sap," I said earnestly, "do you think this is a Yale rush? These yellow boys are liable to turn machine guns on them nice young students."

He shakes with laughter. "In that case they'll need help. Wasn't I a student once?"

He grabs his hat. I grabbed his arm.

"Stay put, can't you?" I pleaded.

"You can hide here if you like," he answered. "I'm going out demonstrating."

"But you don't know what it's all about."

"Do I care?" he wants to know.

And with that he bounced out of the suite and of course I had to go after him. It began to come over me that I hadn't ought to have held out on the New York Americans. Five years with the Yankees and, on account

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of the depression, they had sent me a contract calling for five thousand smackers less than last year.

Of course I sent it back and told them I was through with baseball—the old boloney—but darned if they didn't act like they believed it. They didn't answer my letter. And I was in no shape to hold out. There was that dame that had sued me for breach of promise, when I never promised her nothing; and the jury gave her ten thousand beans just because she was a Follies girl.

I didn't have so much as fifty plasters in my sock a month after the team went south without me, so I thought it over and decided to go out and burn the fifty simoleons and wire the team I was coming when they sent me transportation.

It was along about two in the morning in Tony's what-you-may-call-it and I was down to five seeds and up to twenty-five whiskies when a young guy came over to me and said, "Surely you ain't Buck Jervis."

"Don't you call me no liar," I says, being kind of ugly what with thinking of everything.

"The greatest left handed pitcher in the world," he says enthusiastically. "Buck, old pal, don't you give in. Without you, the Yankees are like a man without a leg."

"And a couple of arms," I told him. "Sit down, kid, and have one on me."

He sat down. He said his name was Richard Van Hooven, which didn't mean nothing because I never saw him in a news reel. He was about twenty-five and cock-eyed drunk. I kind of liked him. How was I to know he was a millionaire?

"You stick it out," he says to me. "What's five thousand dollars?"

"I ain't got any use for money," I told him, weeping into my drink. "It's the principle of the thing."

"Shake, pal," he demanded.

"Only trouble is, I've got to cave in," I admitted. "I'm busted—absolutely flat."

"Stick it out. They'll land in the cellar without you. Let them. Next year they'll pay you anything you ask."

"They'll have to open a grave to find me next year," I said with the tears rolling down my cheeks.

"How much did they pay you last year?"

"Fifteen thousand dollars."

"Chicken feed. Tell you what. You come to work for me. I'll give you fifteen thousand dollars."

"You got a ball club?" I inquired. "Anyway, I'm shut out. I got to work for them or be outlawed."

He scratched his head.

"No," he said; "I haven't any ball club, but I need a man like you."

"What doin'?"

HE screwed up his face. He was a nice lookin' blond kid with features like a statue in a museum. "I need an intelligent, cultured, congenial companion," he said. "I need him fifteen thousands' worth. Do you like to travel, Buck?"

"Hate it. I can't sleep good on Pullman cars."

"Ocean liners," he declared. "You sleep like a baby in a stateroom. Sea air is good for your health. Come on. We'll go to my place."

"Listen, feller," I said, "you're drunk. I'm congenial, all right, but those other things ain't up my street. I can't do nothing for you."

He snapped his fingers. "You're my secretary," he declared. "Only left handed secretary in the world."

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"But that's letter writing, ain't it? I can't write no letters."

"I never answer any," he assured me. "You and me will go to my quarters and in the morning we'll talk it over."

By that time I wasn't very snappy and I didn't know how to get rid of him, so I came to next morning in a bed in a room in some hotel, and there's Van Hooven snoring alongside of me. I woke him up and asked him who the hell he was and how I got there. Well, it seems that he was a drunk who always knew what he was doing, and he told me I had accepted a job as his secretary and that was that.

He told me there was a woman making trouble for him for no reason, just like my case, and we compared notes over a bottle of champagne and found we was what he called kindred souls. In order not to be annoyed by this society dame who claimed he promised to make her his lawful wedded wife, though he never even had kissed her, he was making a boat for a place called Buenos Aires which is in South America. Don't ask me where. And he told me that he had an income of a hundred thousand dollars a year and no mother to guide him, and he was a good catcher and him and me could pass the horsehide for diversion on this ocean liner.

"Think of it, Buck," he says. "You disappear. Along about June, the Yankees are on the toboggan and they send for you. You can't be found. They finish in last place. You get millions of dollars' worth of publicity on your disappearance and you can mace them for fifty thousand next year. Meanwhile you and me will be having the time of our lives down in Buenos Aires."

"I'm off women," I told him. "Will there be women down there?"

"Yes, but they can't speak English."

I grinned. "You can get stewed and ask them to marry you and they won't understand you?"

"Right," he said and he slammed me on the back.

"I accept your proposition, but fifteen grand is too much."

"Would you hurt my feelings, Buck, by talking about money?" he wanted to know. There were tears in his eyes. I ought to have known then that he was nuts.

WE got into Buenos Aires about five in the afternoon, had our dinner and were sitting in our parlor wondering what was doing in the town when that demonstration started. And five minutes later Dick and I were right in the middle of a mob of crazy kids who were yelling at the top of their lungs the Spanish words for "Kill the Umpire!" Anyway, that's all it meant to me.

If you never heard of Buenos Aires you'll be surprised to learn that it's a town darn near as big as New York, only it's inhabited by dagoes and wops. It certainly astonished me to find that these kind of people could put up buildings that were just as good as ours and had parks and subways and taxicabs and big stores just like they were civilized. And students, too. These kids were well dressed and bare headed and obstreperous like they might have been turned out of Yale or Harvard or Columbia. And they were just as bloodthirsty.

Some of them had kerosene torch lights and others had sticks and a few of them were flourishing revolvers. When I saw the guns I knew that these students were nastier than the kind we

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have up north and I yanked Dick by the sleeve and said "Let's get out of here." Fat chance.

Say, I guess there were ten thousand in that mob which overflowed the park in front of the palace and howled like a lot of hyenas.

Dick told me they were daring the president to come out.

"What have they got against him?" I asked.

"Who cares?" he laughs and then he howls in Spanish, "Kill the president!"

The crowd around us laughed and some of them patted Dick on the back.

This park, which was about twice as big as Madison Square, was black with people now, but the crowd stopped moving forward. The reason for that was that there had arrived a whole regiment of cavalry which drew up in front of the big red brick building, and naturally, nobody wanted to get kicked by a horse.

They hooted and yelled and finally a man came out on a balcony on the third story and held up his hand for silence. He didn't get it. They howled louder and began to throw old fruit at him. If he hadn't known he was out of throwing distance, I don't suppose he would have come out. You see, there was a big iron picket fence in front of the palace and the building was set back quite a distance and the man on the balcony was at least three hundred feet from where we stood. Besides, there was the cavalry between him and us. They chucked cabbages, eggs, oranges and apples at him. Some of the students had been forehanded and brought bags of stuff with them to throw at the president.

"They're wasting their ammunition," Dick said to me. "Nobody could hit him at that distance."

"Nobody but me," I said, not boasting at all. Many's the time, when I played the outfield, I could stand in deep center and put a ball in the catcher's mitt in time to nab the runner at the plate.

"Of course," exclaimed Dick. "I forgot. Here, gimme that."

He grabbed an apple out of the hand of a boy who was just about to waste it and handed it to me and then shouldered the crowd aside to give me room. You understand I didn't have anything against this guy; in fact I didn't even know who he was except that he had a uniform of green and yellow on and they were calling him El Presidente. To me, he was nothing but a target. So I drew back the old left arm and put all I had behind it and let her fly. The difference between me and all the other southpaws is that they're wild.

CHAPTER II.

IN COMES A DUKE.

I'M telling you I never done a prettier job. The old apple flew straight as a bullet. It lifted above the crowd, didn't even loop, but went in a line directly for that balcony and banged plop upon the president's nose. He gave a yell, staggered backward, and the crowd shrieked like lunatics. I saw the blood spurt out and a couple of men rush onto the balcony with handkerchiefs, and the next thing there was a horrible crash and rattle and roar. The soldiers had fired right into the crowd. It was the worst outrage since the Boston Massacre that I read about in grammar school. Just because I busted the old boy's nose with an apple from three hundred feet, they had to go and murder a lot of kids that were only having fun.

Boy, what a stampede! Dick grabbed

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my arm and we catapulted through that mob like knives through hot cheese. Behind us the shooting kept up, but there were hundreds of students between us and the guns to stop the bullets. Dick and me were out of the park in the van of the multitude and we ducked down a side street, turned into another and the next thing we knew we were at the back of our own hotel just at the barroom entrance.

We went into the bar, dove for a bench in a dark corner and sat down to get our breath. Nobody paid any attention to us. All the bartenders and the customers were at the windows. The street was full of students legging it away from the scene of the crime.

"Just for a bloody nose," I said, "they have to go and shoot a lot of people. I never did think they was civilized."

Dick was very white and shaky. "It was my fault," he said in a low tone. "You didn't know any better."

"Yeah?" I growled. "What did he come out there for, I'd like to know? I'm telling you it was the prettiest peg I ever made."

"I hope to Heaven they don't find out," he said tensely. "It's lucky we're strangers and it was dark. Maybe we won't be identified."

"I'm not ashamed of that throw," I said stubbornly. "Nobody but me could have hit him."

"For Heaven's sake, Buck, don't breathe to a soul that you threw that apple."

"I don't know anybody down here. Say, they wouldn't do anything, would they? I only busted his nose."

He shook his head. "They would stand you up before a firing squad and me with you."

He meant it. I had to believe him and I began to get scared.

"Why, the dirty greasers!" I said. "They couldn't shoot us for that."

"Buck," he said excitedly, "we're in a terrible mess. We started a massacre and you bet there'll be an investigation. The city will be combed for the man who hit the president. Fortunately we're strangers; the crowd was excited; most likely nobody can identify us. We've got to lie low and watch our step. And the first thing you've got to quit is telling everybody you meet that you're Buck Jervis, the greatest left handed pitcher in the world."

"Why?"

"Because, you nit-wit, they'll realize that nobody but a baseball pitcher could throw an apple a hundred yards and break the president's nose. When I think what you've got us into—"

"Now wait a minute, wise guy; was it me that wanted to get into this demonstration?"

"That's an entirely different thing. There were ten thousand demonstrators and you're the only one the police will be looking for. There was no harm in joining the parade. But, to deliberately take aim—"

"Lemme ask you one question. Who give me the apple?"

"That was because I didn't think you could hit him."

I looked at the sap with pity for his lack of human intelligence. "You seen me pitch for the Yankees and you didn't think I could hit him? I've a mind to chuck up this job. I can't afford to work for one of these here morons."

Dick slammed me on the back and snapped his fingers at the waiter. "'You're priceless," he says. "You've given me one million laughs."

"Remember that when they're shooting you," I said to him and that choked him off. He ordered a couple of high-

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balls and we didn't say anything for a little while.

I WAS doing a lot of thinking, though. A baseball player has to meet up with a lot of college guys, the way the game is run nowadays, but I never struck a bird that was anything like Richard Van Hooven. He was a tall, very good looking lad with light brown curly hair and blue eyes that were innocent as a baby's and you never would expect him to put anything over on you which was where you were wrong.

On board the steamer coming down that fellow got me into at least six fights with gamblers going to Havana and with dagoes going to Rio and spigs on the way to Buenos Aires. And some dame was always accusing me of writing her love letters. Whenever he felt like writing poetry to a girl or telling her that he adored her more than tongue can tell, he wrote her a letter and signed my name to it.

And when I kicked up a fuss about that, he claimed it was what a secretary was for. He said he was paying me fifteen thousand a year so he could sign my name to his letters.

You couldn't blame it all on liquor. Dick didn't drink an awful lot. Once in a while he'd get stewed, like the night he hired me, but it's my opinion that he didn't need booze to be drunk; he was born cock-eyed.

Him and me got along pretty good. That crazy laugh of his was something you couldn't resist and he was always laughing even when I was trying to talk to him serious. And what a kidder! Even now I couldn't really believe they would shoot him and me for plugging the president.

"We better go up to our rooms and hit the hay," he said. "It's our first night in B. A.," which is what they call this town among themselves on account of its long name. "We'll sneak up quietly and maybe they'll think we were in our suite all the time."

We pussyfooted it across the lobby and went up the stairs to our hangout, the same being on the second floor front. We took off our coats and collars and rung for a quart of champagne and settled down.

"I hear there is a place called the Boca," said Dick, "that makes Hell look like a Methodist Church strawberry festival, but you've got to be in good trim to do it right so we won't go to the Boca until to-morrow night."

"Which is oke by me," I told him. "How long have we got to stay in this punk town?"

"Well, they say it's the best in South America. We'll see how they take what happened to-night. Maybe it'll all blow over."

JUST as he finished talking, the phone rang and the operator told him that there was a gent by the name of the Duke of Rugborough downstairs who wanted to see him.

"Damn," said Dick. "Well, let the blighter come up."

"A duke?" I exclaimed. "You mean one of those English dukes that wear crowns?"

"He's got a coronet, I believe," my pal told me. "He wears it only on state occasions. He's what they call a remittance man."

"Come again."

"A remittance man is an Englishman who is so popular in England that his relatives chip in and pay him a salary to go somewhere else. The farther away he goes, the more money they pay him. That's why Rugborough is in Buenos Aires."

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"A bum, eh?"

Dick chuckled. "Very gentlemanly, though. He must read the papers every day to find out who has arrived in town who'll stand for a touch. I hate to admit it, but Rugborough is my brother-in-law."

"You're related to a duke?" I gasped.

"Unfortunately, he married my sister about five years ago. She pays him ten thousand dollars a year to live out of England. You'll like him, though. You and he have much in common. You're on the same mental plane, as it were."

"Listen to me, young feller, if that's a knock—"

"I mean that primarily you are both sporting characters. Here he is. Remember. You're not a baseball player. This guy babbles." Dick opened the door and in comes none other than the Duke of Rugborough.

It being the first time that I ever set eyes on an English duke, I gave myself an eyeful of him. He was the skinniest bird that ever kept out of a consumptives' hospital and he was taller than Long Tom Hughes. He had one of those long faces that was so narrow that you almost couldn't see it when he looked straight at you. He was bald except for some straw colored hair around the edges and he didn't have a hat and he had a big nose, and a pair of small, washed-out blue eyes. Add to that a little sandy mustache and buck teeth and a chin that was as sharp as somebody's elbow and you have a very swell photograph of his grace, which was what they called him in England before they pushed him on a ship for South America.

Now this curiosity was wearing a suit of clothes about four sizes too large for him, a kind of a greenish brown in color, and he had white spats and shoes about one inch wide, but they must have been number fourteen double A or maybe longer.

He looked at us both and he grinned and he tossed a bundle of words at us. It was quite a while before I could understand the guy at all, though I always heard they talked American over in England.

"Glub, glub, glub, glub, gobble," he remarked to Dick and shook his hand like a pump handle.

"You know, Bugs," said Dick, "when I opened a map of the world, bandaged my eyes and jabbed a pin in the place where I would go, I forgot entirely that you were spoiling the atmosphere down here."

The duke let out a high pitched girlish giggle. "Gobble, gobble, gobble," he said good naturedly.

"And now permit me to introduce to you the Honorable Buckram Jervis, member of Congress from Oklahoma," stated Dick.

"Meaning me?" I wanted to know.

"Surely you haven't forgotten that you're one of the leading lights of the House of Representatives," said Dick reproachfully. "The honorable was very seasick on the way down, your grace."

"Fawncy," remarked the duke as he shook my hand. I'm telling you it was like taking hold of an uncooked abalone, to touch his paw.

"The duke, you know, is a member of the House of Lords," said Van Hooven. "You two will have a lot to talk about."

"I don't understand him, so I can't talk to him," I replied. I'd heard a lot about dukes, and this one was a terrible disappointment.

"There's nothing the matter with his speech except adenoids," Dick told

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me. "Park yourself, Bugsy, and sip a little nectar."

THE duke took a drink and stretched himself out on a silk sofa. He put his dirty boots on it. He and Dick talked a little, and all of a sudden I began to get his lingo.

"Lots of excitement in the village," he was saying to Dick. "You must have seen the warfare in the plaza from your window."

"Yes," replied Dick. "We were interested spectators. What was it all about?"

His grace chortled. It sounded like an Airedale that had choked on a bone.

"Lot of dissatisfaction with President Ilioti," he explained. "I don't follow their silly squabbles, but it appears this fellow is a reactionary. Not only that, but he refuses to sign any bills passed by the Congress and so they can't become laws."

"We need a President like that up north," said Dick. "What was all the shooting for?"

"Oh, some Johnny potted him when he came out on the balcony to read the riot act. Caught him on the beezer with an orange—"

"Apple," I corrected.

"Congressman!" said Dick sharply. "If his grace says it was an orange, that ought to be good enough for us. Don't forget he's a relative of mine."

"By Jove, that's so," declared the Englishman. "And how is the delightful Susie?"

"She says that absence from you doesn't make the heart grow fonder."

"Your sister always did make it hard for a fellow. I'm jolly glad you're here, old boy. You can tell her that it's deuced expensive and the old stipend doesn't begin to go around."

"Who do they think threw the orange?" asked Dick anxiously.

The duke shrugged his thin shoulders. "Don't inquire of me. I heard somebody say, down in the lobby, that it is life imprisonment or decapitation for the poor devil if they catch him. The police have orders to bring him in dead or alive."

Dick winked at me, but he didn't have to tell me to keep quiet. It was tough that I couldn't get the finest throw I ever made on the records, but I didn't think I would brag about it. I almost wished I'd missed him.

"What's going on in town?"

"Oh, nothing much. The opera, a few Spanish theaters. Night life in these parts is deadly dull."

"How do you amuse yourself? Know any girls?"

"You going to write to Susie about my goings on?"

"No, I'm asking for information. Buckram is crazy about women."

"Yeah?" I answered. "If I don't talk to another one until 1950, that will be soon enough."

"Could you lend a lad five pounds?" asked his grace.

DICK hauled out a roll of hundred peso notes and tossed him a few. The duke caught them like a seal catches a fish. Immediately he cheered up and poured himself another drink without an invitation.

"Give you a bit of advice," he said. "You can look at the Spanish women any afternoon in the shopping street, the Calle Florida, but don't try to get acquainted. The husbands have no sense of humor. Ha, ha."

"What's funny about that?"

"I was thinking about an American Johnny they found floating in the Rio de la Plata."

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"You'll observe, Congressman, that Bugsy has a swell sense of humor," said Dick. "In what river do they float the Englishmen, your grace?"

"Eh? Oh, the same river; it's the only one, you know."

"I see. Make a note, Congressman, to keep out of the river. Bugs, could you use five hundred dollars?"

The duke's queer eyes lit up. "Indubitably," he said.

"Whate'er betide," declared Dick, "you have been spending the evening with us."

"But I haven't."

"In that case you aren't going to have five hundred dollars."

"Ah," remarked his grace. "You've been up to something. How long have we been together?"

"When did you finish dinner?"

"About eight o'clock."

"You joined us immediately. We strolled around town and had a few drinks at your apartment. Yes?"

"I remember everything now," stated Rugborough. "Why, to be sure!"

Dick placed a thick roll of bills in his hand and the duke buried them in a bored manner.

"Who is she?" he demanded.

Dick laughed. "A little intrigue of the Congressman's," he replied, "and none of your business. Suppose you toddle away now."

"Oh, I have nowhere to go," replied the duke.

"Where do you live?"

"Calle Callao, 24."

Dick picked up the phone. "Call a taxi for his grace, the Duke of Rugborough," he commanded.

"So you're putting me out," said the duke, shaking his head.

"With all that money in your pocket you'd waste an evening with us?" asked Dick.

"By Jove, that's so!" exclaimed the duke. He groaned and lifted himself from the couch. "I'll make a call or two," he informed us. "Dine with you to-morrow, eh, what?"

Dick nodded. "I suppose so," he said mournfully.

"What was the idea of all that?" I wanted to know when the nobleman had departed.

"While dukes are for sale at a dollar a dozen in dear old England," Dick told me, "I imagine that they still have a certain standing away down here. In case of trouble, we have a peer of the realm to swear that we couldn't have been in the demonstration because we were with him. English dukes, you know, are very undemonstrative."

"You talk like a nut," I told him.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Of course the scut will blackmail me, but that can't be helped. Now remember that you're a Congressman and you never threw a baseball in your life. I wonder if you could learn to do things with your right hand?"

"Why?"

"Oh, just to prove that you couldn't be the left handed apple thrower."

"But nobody would believe that I'm a Congressman."

"Nobody down here would believe that a Congressman could be one if he judged by appearances. Don't bother me to think, Buck. It wouldn't do you any good anyway."

"Is that so?" I told him. "I got more sense than you. Didn't I try to keep you out of that row?"

"You ought to have used force," he retorted. "Difference between you and me is that I have lucid moments. Answer the door, will you?"

I opened the door. Standing in the hall was a spig. He had on a frock coat and a tall hat, wore a mustache and

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goatee that were coal black, and he had bushy hair as I noticed when he took his coat off. He looked hard at me out of a pair of eyes like a snake's and then he made a leap and threw his arms round my neck and kissed me on the cheek.

CHAPTER III.

RED-HEADED WOMAN.

I HEARD Dick howl with laughter and I busted the lunatic's grip and would have sloughed him if Dick hadn't grabbed hold of my left just in time.

"He's a friend, Buck," he shouted. "A dear old pal. Don't hit him, he may be your mother."

The spig bowed very low and waved his high hat.

"It is he! It is the two hes!" he exclaimed. "Brothers! Comrades! I salute you!"

"Who the devil are you and what do you want?" asked Dick. "I've just got rid of one pest and in comes another."

"Pest? What is that?" asks the foreigner. "Gentlemens, I am General Ibañez y Resolva."

"A general, eh? Well, meet the Congressman. Congressman, the general."

The guy bowed again and, the next thing I knew, I was doing it. I don't know why.

"And whom have I the honor to address?" he asked of Dick.

"Call me sweetheart," replied that comic.

"Sweetheart? I do not know the word."

"And maybe that's a good thing," Dick told him. "State your business, general, and probably you'll find out that you have tapped on the wrong door."

"Ah, *non,* not that. I never make the mistake," replied the general. He closed the door behind him. He came close to me and he put his forefinger on his left eyelid and pulled it down.

"I have seen all," he said, most mysterious. "Congressman, you are a hero!"

"Look here," said Dick, much worried, "what the heck are you talking about?"

"It is you who have drawn the blood of our tyrant. You, *señor,* have given your friend the apple. You, Congressman, have hurled it with the accuracy of a marksman and the strength of a giant."

"That was nothing," I told him. "You ought to have seen me in a game in Philadelphia—"

"Shut up," yelled Dick. "General, you're cuckoo! We don't know what you're talking about. We haven't been out of this room all evening."

"Ah," said the general. "You are discreet as well as daring. It gives me the great pleasure to welcome you to the ranks of the revolution."

"Not having any at present," Dick told him. And, as we're expecting visitors—"

"You are Americans, from the land of liberty—"

"That's a laugh," commented Dick.

"You have come to aid us break the chains which bind us. You have struck the first blow. One day your statues will adorn our public squares."

"You're making a terrible mistake," Dick told him. "We saw the disturbance outside from our window. Nothing but a lot of students. We were sitting here with the Duke of Rugborough all evening."

The general laughed, then sat down

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and lighted himself a cigar. He waved his hand.

"YOU can trust me," he said. "I am president of the junta. By your action you have joined our party. I saw your noble deed. I welcome you to our ranks."

"Sorry," Dick told him. "We are not interested."

The general smiled in a very sinister manner. "That is too bad," he said. "Do you know that twenty brave revolutionists are weltering in their gore to-night? If you struck our chief magistrate because you were heart and soul for the revolution, I kiss you on the cheeks. But, if you committed an overt act from another motive—if you are not our allies—well, their blood is on your heads and you must pay the penalty. It was your act, *señor*"—he turned to me—"which caused the troops to open fire. You are either revolutionists or agents of the tyrants."

He drew a revolver from his pocket and fondled it.

"You will kindly tell me to which party you are allied."

"Put up that gun, general," requested Dick. "I ought to have told you that I am a member of the Sons of the American Revolution. One of my ancestors threw the tea overboard in Boston Harbor and another one told General Washington to cross the Delaware. I go round the world looking for revolutions just to join them. How is yours getting along?"

"Comrade!" cried the general. He threw his arms around Dick's neck and kissed him plenty.

"Comrade yourself and see how you like it," answered Dick. "I'm glad you don't use lip rouge."

"It is you two who have lighted the torch for us. The blood in the Plaza de Mayo cries out for vengeance. Give me your hand, comrade! And yours!"

We shook hands with him and he put away his cannon.

"Now," he said in a low tone, "for the present we must lie low and make no move. You will be informed when the time comes. And this is the watchword—'O'Higgins!'"

That struck me as very comical, so I laughed and the general reached for his gun.

"He can't help it, general," said Dick. "He has what is known as the laughing sickness. He gets it from looking too long in mirrors. You can depend upon Congressman Jervis. Why, he wrote the Volstead act."

"Vol—Vol—what is that?"

"Does it matter?"

"No-o," admitted our visitor. "Now, comrades, do nothing, be careful not to awaken suspicion. My agent will be known to you by the word 'O'Higgins.'"

He bowed three or four times on his way to the door and finally he bowed himself out. I looked at Dick and Dick looked at me and Dick was very serious, for him.

"THIS is a terrible mess," he said.

"Can't you tell it's a joke?" I said, grinning.

Dick turned a solemn face on me. "No," he said. "How do you tell it's a joke?"

"The password, you goof. O'Higgins. That's an Irish name. I know a restaurant in New York run by a guy named O'Higgins."

When he quit laughing at that, Dick said to me, "It's not your fault you got your education on the run, Buck. The word 'trouble' comes undistilled from the Irish language. Wherever there is a row going on you'll find that an Irish-

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man started it and more Irish are keeping it going. For your information I will state that a hundred years ago the Argentine was a peaceful, well behaved Spanish colony—but along came an Irishman named O'Higgins and started a revolution. I'm told that there is a statue to O'Higgins in every public square in this country and Chile. You might say that O'Higgins is an old Spanish word indicating ruction. Do you get me?"

"Gosh," I said. "Then this feller wasn't kidding, eh?"

"You and I are a couple of thirty-second degree revolutionists. The way I looked at it, the general was dangerous and we had better humor him. We'll get out of Buenos Aires to-morrow, if you have no objections. We'll get out of the country. It's only an overnight trip to Montevideo, which is in the republic of Uruguay."

"New York is a good town," I said.

Dick looked sad. "Fact is, old man," he said, "I can't go back. I had to leave the United States in a hurry. I should have told you before."

This knocked me all of a heap. "You can't go back?" I asked him. "Did you kill somebody? You said you was running away from a doll."

"That's not all. I'm in contempt of court, a federal court, worse luck."

"What for?"

"It's a long story, Buck," he told me. "I was subpœnaed as a witness against my bootlegger. I didn't show up. They sent around a court officer to bring me in and I bounced a cloisonné vase on his dome. The judge declared I was in contempt when he heard about that and ordered me brought in dead or alive. That was the night I ran into you in Tony's. A friend had tipped me off and I booked on the South American boat."

"That can be fixed, can't it?" I asked him.

"Well," he said, "I suppose it could, but, just before the boat sailed, I wrote the judge a letter. It was rather indiscreet. I mentioned some of his ancestors indiscreetly; I expressed my opinion of the Prohibition laws most emphatically and told him I was the head of the biggest bootlegging gang in New York and I was going to have him taken for a ride."

"Say," I said anxiously. "You didn't sign my name to that one, did you?"

He grinned. "It didn't occur to me. That would have been an inspiration. But you see that I can't very well go home."

"What did you do it for?"

"It seemed to be a fine idea at the time. I forgot I might want to return to New York sooner or later. But cheer up, old top. We'll take the boat to-morrow for Montevideo."

"O. K.," I said sadly. "You ain't got as much sense as one of those Pekinese pups. Answer the phone, will you? I can't talk the lingo."

Dick picked up the phone. A lot of Spanish was being spattered in it from the other end. It was bad news, too, as I could tell by Dick's pan.

"*Sí, sí, sí, sí,*" he kept saying, which is "Yes" in spig.

He hung up, grabbed his hat with one hand and my arm with the other.

"Come on," he snapped. "We're discovered. The police have surrounded the hotel and a squad are on their way upstairs. That was the general. We're to go to room 616. It's our only chance."

He was out of the door and I was with him. He took the broad marble stairs four at a time. I could manage six steps in one hop myself.

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Needless to say we made time to the sixth floor and ran down the corridor until we came to room 616. Dick knocked on the door. It swung open and we rushed in. When we saw what let us in, I almost popped over. It was a red-headed dame and she didn't have nothing on but a set of those blue satin thingumajigs that girls wear under their dresses.

WHILE red-headed women is poison to me, and, despite the fact that I was scared out of my wits, I had to give in that this one was all the queens in the deck.

She was tall and she was built like the one on the end in the Vanities that I seen in New York as guest of the management after we won the series with Chicago last year. And she didn't have much more on, either. Her legs were straight as some pitchers' curves and her curves—let's not go into that. Besides, she pulled on a kimona right away which practically rang down the curtain.

"Welcome, comrades," she says in English.

The effect of this dame on Dick Van Hooven was something to take up with a good doctor. The lad's eyes popped and his mouth dropped open and he turned pale and began to shake. And it wasn't being scared. The effect of trouble on him is to make him merry and bright.

"Venus Aphrodite," he says. "Astarte, Isis, Clara Bow!"

I would have thought he was swearing except for bringing in Clara that I'd seen in a lot of fillums.

"You have no time to lose, comrades," she said, but she smiled at him and looked sort of shaky herself. This was what they call love at first sight on both sides, so I found out afterwards. At the time I thought they were each going to have a fit.

"I'm staying right here with you," says Dick, and he plopped down on a chair.

"You must go," she said. "You cannot remain here."

"Are you a Revolutionist?" he wants to know.

"I am heart and soul in the movement."

"You and me, then, and Buck here, too."

"This way," she says, pulling herself together.

She ran to a window, opened it, and began drawing in a rope. In a minute a plank came right into her window. "You will go down by the skylight of the building next door," she said. "Friends will be in waiting."

Dick shook his head. "Nix," he said. "You may be an apparition. I can't afford to lose you."

She grabbed him by the coat lapels and pulled him toward the window. Dick's answer to that was to put his arms around her and plant a solid kiss on her mouth.

"You've got to come with me or I stay right here," he told her.

That girl's cheeks were as red as her hair when she pulled away from him.

"Foolish one," she said. "We shall meet soon. I cannot go now. I am not dressed. If you want to live to see me again, please do what I tell you."

"Come on, stupid," I said to him. "Cheese it, the cops."

I looked out the window. It was just above the roof of a building that was six feet away. I crawled out on the plank and was on the roof in a jiffy. I saw Dick arguing with her, but finally he crossed the bridge. We both ran for the skylight and climbed down.

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"Buck," he said to me, "that is the future Mrs. Van Hooven."

"You're crazy," I told him. "She's probably the general's wife."

"That's just too bad for the general," he answered, and we started down a flight of stairs. There was a man waiting on the landing below who tried to kiss both of us, but all his lips touched when he made a play for me was the palm of my hand that I pushed him away with.

This fellow led us downstairs and out into a back street. A closed automobile was waiting there and we got into it, Dick and me. The Spaniard said something to the chauffeur and away we went.

"We got a fat chance to leave tomorrow for Monte—er—what you said," I told him. "Do you know what's what? We're in the hands of these Bolshevists. They're taking us to where they make the bombs."

Dick had a goofy smile on his lips. "She'll be with us in an hour," he said in a low tone.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BAND OF DEATH.

"DO you know a song called 'St. Louis Blues'?" I asked my companion.

"I've heard it, yes."

"Remember what it says about red-headed women?"

"Ah," replies this sick swan, "she's an angel."

"Have I got to do all the thinking for the two of us? We have to make our getaway. We can't get mixed up in any revolution."

"What hair, what lips, what eyes! Buck, it was Providence that sent us here."

"I never liked any part of Rhode Island. Snap out of it, will you?" I'll say for him that he did pull himself together.

"Old man," he said, "this is the best thing that could have happened to us. It is evident that the crowd was filled with spies. We were followed, and our identity discovered. If it had not been for the general, they would be marching us off to jail at this minute and shooting us in the morning. Our only chance is to play with the Revolutionary party. They seem to be well organized and know everything that is going on. We'll kid them along, contribute to their war chest and, as soon as I have persuaded her to marry me, we'll go to Montevideo or Paris, wherever she wants to go. I'm telling you that she liked it when I kissed her."

"She looked like bad medicine to me. One of them Joan of Arcs that get all their friends killed."

"I wouldn't go until she had promised to join us in an hour. Just think, Buck, if you hadn't thrown that apple, I never would have met— Lord, I wish I knew her name!"

"I wouldn't have chucked the apple if you hadn't dragged me into that mob," I said, very melancholy. "And now, when we need to have all our brains on the job, you get mushy about a lady revolutionist. What business is it of ours who runs this punk country? What call have we got to get mixed up in it? Good Lord, we could have got shot in New York if we wanted to."

"Buck," he said, "I'm afraid you're a coward."

"Anyway, I'm not a jackass. I ought to have known that you had something the matter with you when you said you'd pay me three hundred

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a week to be a secretary, because good ones only get thirty. We arrive on the liner. We take a cab to a hotel in a town that we don't know anything about, we eat our dinner and all of a sudden we're going to lay down our lives for some funny revolution. We don't even know what they are revoluting for."

"Any cause which enlists a girl like that is good enough for me."

I stopped talking to him. I wished I hadn't held out on the Yankees. It's a lot of fun being South for spring practice. They haven't revoluted down there for seventy years and you can get good corn whisky when you learn the ropes.

The car was shooting through streets lined with blocks of one-story houses all just alike and the pavement was very bumpy. Here was a lad who had a hundred thousand a year to spend and who would be presenting it to his heirs in a day or two. I thought of my old mother away out in Iowa, and I felt sorry I had forgot to send her a letter at Christmas.

By and by the automobile pulled up in front of some kind of restaurant that had all the tables out on the sidewalk. Two men were sitting at a table in the front row and they rose and came over to us when we stepped out.

"O'Higgins," said one of them, holding out his hand.

"O'Higgins," replied Dick.

One of them took my arm and the other one took Dick's arm and they led us through an empty café and down a flight of stairs into a cellar. We stopped in front of a door and somebody looked at us through a peephole.

"O'Higgins," said our boy friends.

Right away the man inside opened the door and took us through a passage and we came into a big room where about twenty of the hardest looking specimens I ever saw were drinking wine.

When I say they were hard I don't mean they were in cheap clothes, but most of them had whiskers or mustaches and they were all wops or dagoes.

TO make matters worse, they began to make noises like snakes.

"They're hissing us," I said to Dick.

"Shut up, boob, that's applause."

"Well, it sounds like hissing."

Some of these bozos were in evening dress and one of them was our friend the general, who came out of a dark corner, still wearing the high hat and frock coat.

"Welcome, dear comrades," he said. "We were praying for your escape. I discovered the police closing in on you in the nick of time."

"Much obliged to you," said Dick. "Say, who was the young lady in 616?"

"Ah, the Señorita Rita Calavero. She is the leader of the women's movement. Fortunately, she lives in the Avenida Palace and she was ready, as always, to take any risk for the cause."

"She is the most beautiful woman I ever saw," Dick told him. "She is single?"

"*Si, señor.* She has sworn to marry no man who does not distinguish himself in the war against the tyrant."

Dick smiled all over his face. "We ought to overthrow this rotten government in a couple of days, eh?" he wanted to know.

"Alas, *señor,* he is strong, the president. He has the army and the navy and airplanes and artillery. It will take time. Now I must introduce you to the comrades."

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The gang in the joint lined up and every one of them had a name you'd have to go to school to learn how to pronounce. After the introductions the general made a speech in which he must have played us up good for some of them tried to kiss us and others hugged our hands.

"We shall drink some champagne," said the general, "until Señorita Calavero comes with the Band of Death."

Somehow I didn't like the sound of that and Dick didn't either because he looked scared and asked what that was.

"Twenty heroic women who have sworn to lay down their lives for the revolution. The *señorita* is chief of the band."

"Red-headed women," I said into Dick's ear. "Poison, that's what they are, and it's about time you found that out."

"Quiet, brainless," he said to me. "Will they take men in the Band of Death? The Congressman and myself want to join up."

"Speak for yourself, will you?" I said savagely. "I'm joining nothing with a name like that."

"It is the organization of the heroic sisterhood. You will be enrolled in the Liberators. *Señor,* the enthusiasm with which you both have embraced our cause brings tears to my eyes."

"I'm crying myself," I mumbled.

Next thing that happened was that we were all sitting at a long table and waiters that they call *muchachos* were opening champagne. A guy with long black whiskers had his arm over my shoulder and would have kissed me, I guess, if it hadn't been for the look in my eye.

While I never went to school much, a fellow can't spend five years in the Big Leagues without getting some sense in his bean, and I knew that we had no business in this cellar with these Bolsheviki, but Dick was completely off his base and anybody could have tagged him out. Gone batty over the chief of the Band of Death, and him with a college education and what have you.

About half an hour went by and I drank as much as they would give me in the hope that there was wood alcohol in the wine, but there wasn't, and all of a sudden the general gave a command and everybody stood up and faced the door and gave a military salute. The door opened and in came a lot of girls. The red-headed one was in front. She had on a blue suit with brass buttons and a red cap with a tassel. She was a big girl—maybe I didn't tell you that—and she looked like the leader of the Amazon March in the Ziegfeld Follies, but the other dames couldn't have got a job with a burlesque show. They came in two by two and most of them was black-haired and swarthy and runty and tough looking and I figured they joined the Band of Death because they was desperate, but all of a sudden I saw a different one at the end of the line.

THIS girl was dark like the others but she had something—in fact she had everything. She kind of shone in the electric lights of the cellar. She had the blackest hair I ever saw and the whitest skin and her eyes were as big as automobile headlights. At first I thought they were black and then I saw they were dark blue. I just stared at that girl and things began swimming. Every second she got more beautiful and while she stayed at the end of the line she still seemed to come right out, walking on air and she grew big like a close-up in the movies, and the bigger her face grew, the lovelier it was and then I realized that her eyes were big,

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dark blue pools and I dove in and I haven't come up yet. Honest, Steve, that's what Fiora done to me the first time I saw her.

I'm telling you I wasn't stewed. Sure I'd drunk a lot of that fizz, but champagne don't make you drunk like whisky.

Anyway, the next thing we knew, we were getting introduced to all the girls and every darn one of them kissed us. The red-headed dame gave me a peck, and I shut my eyes when the homely ones came up, but I opened them and when Fiora put her soft red lips against mine I put my hands against the back of her head and held her there.

Whiff! She closed her fist and punched me in the stomach.

"Pig," she said—at least Dick told me that was what the Spanish word she used meant, but it sounded different. Boy, that girl's little fist was as hard as a rock and it doubled me up.

Right away the general made a speech to her in which he told her I was the hero that busted the president's nose and you ought to have seen the change come over her pretty face. She reached right out and grabbed my big right paw and she kissed it and she looked up at me with tears in her big eyes and said in perfectly good English, "Forgive me, sir. I didn't know."

"This," said the general, "is the Señorita Fiora MacShane."

"Say," I yelled. "You're Irish!"

She gave me a smile that would melt ice. Teeth. Fine big white teeth as even as a row of cubes in a refrigerator but warmer.

"My grandfather came from Ireland," she said. "I am an Argentine."

"The champion professional woman pelota player of the republic," the general told us. "We draw our heroic comrades from the aristocracy, the stage, the common people and the athletes. Love of liberty is in every heart."

"Pelota," I asked. "What's that?"

"You could have seen it in Havana," said Dick.

I grinned at Fiora. "Some kid," I told her. "That's why you pack a wallop in your little bunch of knuckles."

"I do not understand," she said to me. "*Señor,* I was in the crowd at the Plaza de Mayo. I saw it all. You must be the strongest man in the world."

"Oh, well," I said modestly, "put me among the first ten."

"And now," said the general, "we will administer the oath to the new comrades."

All I got to say about that was that it was in Spanish and Dick understood the lingo and knew what he was letting me in for. But the red-headed dame had hold of his left hand when he held up his right hand and I was just wondering how I lived to be twenty-five and never knew there were female kids in the world that made a man's insides turn into jelly. But it seems we swore that we would obey all orders from the junta and never lay down on the revolution and stick on the job until the government had been smashed to pieces and the cause of Liberty was triumphant.

"AND now, *señores,*" said the general, "you can go back to your hotel and wait for the word."

Dick looked at him pop-eyed. "But we can't go back. The police are waiting for us."

The general gave a dirty laugh. "You are quite safe," he said. "It was a little stratagem. After all, you had declared for the revolution."

Dick let go of Rita's hand and stepped close to him.

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"I don't quite get you," he said in a low, soft tone which I knew was dangerous.

"My dear friend," replied the general, "you have sworn the oath. There is no harm now in admitting that there were no police. The stupid authorities have no notion who committed the overt act."

I grabbed Dick's right arm.

"Careful," I whispered. "There are too many of them."

"That was a dirty trick," said Dick gently. "A very dirty trick."

"The ends justified the means," replied the old scoundrel. "You are rich and brave and not likely to be suspected as belonging to our party. We need you. You are responsible for the Massacre of the Plaza de Mayo. We have bound you to us. If you abandon the cause, I, myself, shall inform the police that you are the criminals they seek."

Dick turned to Rita.

"Did you know this was a plant?" he asked reproachfully.

"Yes," she said boldly. "Why not? The revolution needed you. I am not ashamed."

They looked into each other's eyes and then Dick laughed out loud.

"Bully for you," he said. "Buck, it must be a swell cause that lines her up. It's good enough for you and me."

"Nix," I said stoutly.

A hard but small hand crept into mine. "*Señor,*" said the sweetest voice I ever heard.

"Oh, well," I said; "this president must be a skunk. And I led the pitchers in the American League last year and I've done a lot of traveling lately. Hurray for liberty. We could use some up where we come from."

"May I escort you back to the hotel, *señorita?*" Dick asked the red-head.

"I'm sorry. There is a meeting of the inner council to follow this open meeting."

"I'll wait in the lobby and take you to supper."

She shook her head. "Unmarried women do not sup in public with gentlemen."

"We have a suite."

"Impossible."

"Will you lunch with me to-morrow, then?"

She hesitated. The general nodded.

"I shall be pleased. At one in the hotel dining room."

"Listen, beautiful," I said to Fiora. "When do you and me put on the feed bag?"

"Pardon, *señor?*"

"With a name like yours, you don't understand good English? When do I see you?"

"You may see me at the stadium to-morrow night. My partner and I play the Basque women champions."

"You do? I'll be there. But how about a cozy chat, eh?"

She laughed in my face. "The *señor* is too impetuous," she told me. "You must wait."

"Listen," I said, getting peeved, "New York is full of dames that would be glad to be seen with the greatest left handed pit—"

"The Congressman from Oklahoma, you mean," said Dick, quick as a flash. "Will you lay off that stuff?" he whispers.

The best either of us could get was a handshake with the girls and then the general rushed us out and into the automobile that had brought us. We went home slower than we came and I had a look at a lot of fine buildings, and I noticed that the streets were better lighted than in New York. I figured we could have had a good time in a

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town like that if we hadn't got off on the wrong foot.

CHAPTER V.

UNEXPECTED VISITORS.

DICK was *non compos mentis,* if you know what I mean, which I don't. He sat there in a trance and when he came out of it he said:

"Isn't she the most gorgeous creature the world ever seen?"

"Meaning Redney?"

He made a pass at me. I could break the kid into bits if I wanted to, and I blocked the punch easy enough.

"If you make another crack about her hair!" he threatened.

"Yeh? If you want to know who is a gold plated doll, it's Fiora MacShane," I told him. "And I want to remind you that she didn't have nothing to do with the frame-up that we stepped into. Your dame pulled that."

"She's a patriot, Buck," he told me. "Think of the courage, the superhuman determination which caused her to form the Band of Death!"

"Courage! If it came to a scrap between them, Fiora could spot her twenty pounds and K. O. your gal friend in the first round. Fiora has the stuff, Dick. I felt of her muscle. Like a man's."

"You're a roughneck. You can't help it, and you'd pick a roughneck to fall in love with," he sneers. "Rita is an aristocrat. You can see it."

I looked him over and figured how easy I could knock him cold. "I've stood a lot from you," I said. "You lured me out of New York and ruined a great career. You're loony as a jack rabbit; you're the cause of me being a dirty Bolshevist, but I kind of like you. Fiora is as good a lady as the red-headed dame and she's only part spig, while yours goes the whole way. So if you pull one more like that 'roughneck' one, I'll fix your face so Rita won't know whether she's kissing your mouth or your ear."

He just laughed at me. "No offense, old pal," he said. "You like Fiora and I like Rita. You started this argument. Now drop it. Do you know, I think we're going to have a lot of fun."

"As the pig said when he went to the slaughter house."

"Like a fool I got into trouble with the Federal courts and had to get out of the country," he went on as though talking to himself. "Paris was dead. I couldn't dig up a chum to go to South America with me, and I thought a primitive like you would be amusing. You can see for yourself that this big city is a desert. No night life worth while. Women invisible in the streets and cafés. Why, Buck, we would have been bored to death and this is the only decent city in South America. Follow me?"

"I follow you, but I don't know what you're talking about."

"It doesn't matter. By a fantastic accident we assault the president of the republic."

"It was no accident. I aimed at him and I hit him."

"This scoundrel Resolva either saw you throw the apple or his spies did, and followed and identified us. He figured we were rich Americans who could be blackmailed in the interest of this silly revolution which looks to me like his own private show. No doubt he expects to be the next president. He scared us out of the hotel and into his hands. He made us take the rebel's oath. He's got us."

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"And how."

"That's nothing. It means that we are going to have lots of thrills. We've stepped right into intrigue and I've met the most wonderful girl in the world."

"And she played you for a sucker."

He laughed that wild laugh of his. "She'll have to marry me for that. Buck, we're a couple of lucky lads."

"Oh, sure. What did you mean when you called me a prim—primitive?"

"Well, an uncultivated mind, untutored, responding to purely natural impulses."

I looked at him very scornful. "If you're a sample of what education does for a bozo, I'm sorry I ever went to school at all."

WHILE we were still handing it to each other the machine drew up in front of the Avenida Palace Hotel. The street and the whole plaza were full of soldiers and a couple of them came up and gave us the once over before they let us enter the hotel.

"Take a good look at those guys," I said to Dick. "They're going to furnish you the thrills you talked about."

He grinned. "They seem to have the situation well in hand, don't they?"

A bellhop stopped him and talked to him in Spanish at the same time waving his hand at three or four men in evening dress who were bunched at the desk.

Dick turned to me and said, "Go right upstairs, Buck. A little matter of business. I'll be with you in five minutes."

It was fifteen before he turned up and he came in looking like the cat which swallowed the canary.

"I did my best for you, Buck," he said.

"For Heaven's sake, what's up now?"

"You are. You're famous."

"They found out about the apple?"

"On the contrary. They represent *La Nacion, La Prensa* and a couple of other papers. It seems that the duke has been babbling—a bad habit of his. The press learned that this hotel is housing a distinguished guest, a member of the Congress of the United States of America. By the way, you're not my secretary any more. I'm yours. As your secretary I gave them an interview. You see, an American Congressman is a *rara avis* down here."

"What's that?"

"A rare bird. Never having seen any, they are not disillusioned. I discoursed to them upon the world depression, the American tariff, prohibition and lawlessness. I told them that the little trouble to-night wouldn't attract the slightest attention in America and you were so used to shooting outside the Capitol at Washington that you didn't even hear the racket in the plaza to-night."

"Darn it, Dick," I said in alarm, "you can't pull that. They can easy find out I'm not a Congressman. They will put me in jail."

"I bet there isn't a list of members of Congress in the village. By the way, you're an ardent prohibitionist, so don't let me catch you taking a drink."

As I was taking off my shoes when he said that, I tossed one of my number twelves across the room and buried it in his stomach. It must have tickled the solar plexus, because he went down and out and, the way I was feeling, I didn't care if it killed him. I went into my room and went to bed and a few minutes later Dick came in, looking very white, and crawled into his bed without saying anything.

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I guess he realized that you could only go just so far with Buck Jervis.

When I woke up the sun was pouring into the big room, warm and bright and cheerful. The windows were open and I heard taxis honking and voices in the streets and all sorts of city noises. I rolled out of bed, ran for the shower and came out feeling like a million dollars. In the daylight, all the happenings of the day before didn't seem real. For a minute I thought I had dreamed about the apple and the shooting and the revolutionary oath.

I put on my bathrobe and went over and looked out the window.

YOU probably won't believe it unless you have a wonderful education, but when it is winter in New York it is summer in Buenos Aires, and when it's winter down there it is summer in New York. There is a long scientific explanation about why that is which I don't remember, but the weather outside was just like August instead of March.

I looked across the plaza, a very lovely little park, and saw the government palace. Flags were flying from it and a few sentries were marching up and down. I looked the other way, and I could see up a very wide straight street about a mile long, at the far end of which was a building like the Capitol at Washington, which is the House of Congress for the Argentine. Mobs of people were in the street and sitting on benches in the park. There were about as many automobiles as you'd see on Fifth Avenue.

While I always thought that the countries outside the U. S. A. were the boloney, it came on me that this was one very swell city—civilized and rich and able to take care of itself—and when I looked up the Avenida de Mayo it struck me that the gang we met in that cellar were sort of comical—all except Fiora—and she was probably mixed up in it for a lark. Anyway, it didn't seem worth bothering about when breakfast was the big thing. I woke Dick up so he could tell the spigs what we wanted to eat. He came out of bed, clicking on all six, went through a lot of setting up exercises and finally called downstairs and ordered the ham and eggs.

Dick was feeling fine and didn't have a worry on his mind.

"Congressman," he said, "didn't we have a swell evening?"

"I've enjoyed myself more."

He clapped me on the back. "Do you realize that I've a luncheon date with the most beautiful woman in the world? It was worth all that claptrap to make good with Rita."

"It's my opinion," I said, "that they're all a bunch of nuts and she's one of 'em."

"There's a Revolutionary party in every country," he said, "even in the United States, but they take it out in conversation. Of course there is always civil war in the banana republics, but the Argentine is a strong nation with a stable government. They have a well drilled army and navy and they settle their troubles with ballots, not with bullets. Of course Rita is an enthusiastic little rebel, but I'll talk sense to her at lunch, get her to pack up and we'll slip over to Montevideo to-night and get married."

"I've got a date to see this pelota game to-night," I told him. "Fiora is playing."

"You're not seriously interested in that little Irish-Argentine, Congressman," he jeered. "Remember your position."

"And the Congressman stuff is out.

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It never was funny. And Fiora is a swell chicken. Besides, that red-headed dame isn't going to elope with you. Not to-night anyway. You promised to kick out this government for her, and she don't look like she had a sense of humor where broken promises are concerned."

"Pooh! Wait till I get her alone—" He stopped to answer the telephone.

"Yes," he said. "We're having breakfast. Eh? I suppose so."

"What's up?"

"Coronel Ramon Espada is on his way up," he said uneasily.

My heart sank away down into my boots.

"What's he want?" I groaned.

"Who can tell?" he asked, a little nervous. "The operator asked if we were ready to receive visitors and announced the colonel. Well, he'll state his business all right."

A minute later there was a knock on our door and Dick opened it. In the hall stood a man with a brass helmet, white gloves, a sword and a uniform which was green with a half ton of gold lace. Behind him were two soldiers with guns.

"Pinched," I said under my breath. Dick gave me a warning look. It was some satisfaction to see that he was as scared as I was.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

Fiftieth Anniversary Number—*Next Week!*

River of Death

IT is said in northern Brazil that no white man has ever returned from an exploration trip up the famous Rio Mortes or River of Death. All approaches are cut off by impenetrable brush, wild animals, the thirty-foot surcie snake and what is worse, the hostile Chervantes Indians. Concealed in jungle recesses they fire at intruders with long arrows tipped with thigh bones of animals, ground to an edge as sharp as a steel razor and poisoned with a plant distillation so powerful that even a scratch will cause death in a few minutes.

The cruelty of the Spanish conquerors is responsible for this unholy hatred of all white men. Enslaved to work in the gold mines years ago, the natives revolted and slew their Spanish captors. Three ambitious Brazilians attempted to penetrate the river route, but were captured. Two were slain on the spot, but the third was lucky enough to be wearing gold-rimmed spectacles at the time and the Chervantes, viewing them as an omen of power, allowed him to live. The superstitious natives made him medicine man and furnished him with a wife. His escape broke the long standing axiom that white men "never come back."

Their principal pastime is decapitating the heads of their victims, removing the skull and filling the scalp with hot pebbles and sand. The shriveled object is then dipped in an amber-colored preservative and wax eyes added and colored. The Indians accord a special method of execution to their dependents, particularly old men and women, who can't keep up with the times. They are simply brained with a war club. *Albert Perkins.*

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Nixon trained the parabola on the night club floor

Murder on the Mike

By ARTHUR B. REEVE

Craig Kennedy, scientific detective, planned a radio third degree for the suspects in the broadcasting studio murder

KENNEDY gently crinkled the cellophane wrapper of a cigar about two feet from the microphone. Slowly he moved it closer to the "mike" as his fingers crinkled it more vigorously.

From the loud speaker on the other side of the heavy plate glass window of the control room, where I was, came a marvelous imitation of arson.

"Some fire!" grinned Jim Barnes, the director, looking at me. "Craig is certainly there with new twists on sound effects. We'll use it in your speakeasy fire scene."

Barnes nodded enthusiastically through the big picture window to Craig, out in the studio, and I pantomimed, clapping my hands. Craig saluted with a smile.

"I'll rehearse that fire scene with the cast. You stay in here and listen to it, Walter. Now— Just look at that; they're at it again!"

I followed the direction of Jim's eyes. Neville White, the movie star, was talking earnestly to Rita Flambeau, little blond blues singer, the "torch singer" of the Club Flambeau, just around the corner from the Plaza in the "Flaming Fifties."

Tom Fergus, Rita's husband, was

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seated on a chair in the row by the door of Studio B. He rose as Harriet Moore, song and dance girl at the club, entered.

It was strictly pantomime to us, for the control room was practically sound proof to the studio, and they were at some distance from the mike.

"Did you get that dirty look La Flambeau gave Harriet Moore?" I commented.

Barnes nodded. "I was more interested in Neville and Fergus. That interchange was like the dotted lines which cartoonists draw to carry dagger looks. Whoopee! There goes little Jerry Shaw, butting in with Neville and Rita."

"More t r o u b l e!" I exclaimed. "Jerry's jealous of La Flambeau. But her crush on White won't last long. They never do. It's Harriet that's the deep one in this cast."

Barnes opened the padded door leading from the control room to the studio. "I'll put a spoke in their wheels for a time," he nodded. "I'll rehearse 'em all in that fire scene. Now you listen. Tell me if La Flambeau gets her scream in right when the fire in the speak is discovered."

Whatever might be the mutual cross-currents of their passions, the cast of the talking picture called "Synthetic Murder" certainly put over that scene with a bang. And Kennedy, as the fire, was a wow!

"How about it?" asked Barnes, coming back to the control room.

"Knock-out!" I reported enthusiastically.

"Well, you're the doctor," bustled Barnes. "Walter, do you have your copy of the script there with you? Do you want to get out in front of the mike and let me time you before I put the finishing touches on a few other little things with the cast? We go on the air in fifteen minutes."

GRABBING my script, typed on the special soft paper that does not crackle before the mike, I passed through the padded door of the control room and into the studio. There I assumed my favorite position, just a bit diagonal to the mike because I have found that from that position I can dampen the tendency to be too sibilant in my speech.

"To-night," I began reading, "I am happy to take you with me, folks, on a personally conducted tour, as it were, to the sound picture studio of Liberty Pictures. They are producing there a mystery drama which I have written and titled 'Synthetic Murder.'

"We have with us to-night the members of the cast, and I have selected one of the highest dramatic points in the picture for reproduction on the air.—Remember, they're all here; even the continuity writer.—And we have just made a little radio drama for you of the taking of a sound picture drama, so that you will know not only what is done, but how it is done . . .

"Now, first let me paint a picture for you. It always interests me, the making of a talking picture. It's no one-man job. It takes a great many people to make a successful picture. Perhaps you think it rests with the star, or the cast, or with the story or the author. Far from it. I shall show you the skill of the director, of the adapter, the scenarist, the designer of sets and of costumes, and the research director, as well as of the art director, and the technical director, the camera man, the lighting expert, the sound expert, and even the crew, either on stage or on location . . ."

I paused a couple of seconds.

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"Once you pass into the sound studio and the door closes, you are assailed, as it were, by the sensation of being cut off from the outside world. The great sign over the door which reads 'Silence' fairly screams at you.

"The door closes after you. You find yourself in a room where height seems limitless. People are bustling about and talking, but there is a strangeness about it all. Noises seem to die away instantly.

"When you speak, you feel a strange sensation of loneliness because your words vanish so quickly. Your syllables seem to decay. It is nothing like the old silent movie studio. The reason is obvious. Your voice is yours only when you are speaking. When you finish, your sound waves must not conflict with those of the next speaker.

"To me, there is something fascinating about every scene. It is silent drama; and it is also a dialogue drama. Yet it is something indefinably more, something still new, that we don't yet thoroughly understand. The science of acoustics has married the science of light. The offspring is a new art."

Jim Barnes snapped his stop watch, smiled and nodded as he made a notation of the elapsed time. In this manner he had gone through it all, piece by piece, until he knew by estimate, almost to the second, how long each sequence would take. If by chance some one who was an amateur slowed up, that was known as "mike fright." Barnes now knew where and how much to hurry up some one else in order to keep within the time limit.

BARNES took about ten minutes polishing up the cast in various points which previous rehearsals had shown to be necessary. That kept them all too busy for further exhibition of their emotional cross-currents. Then came that tense two or three minutes when the studio itself is about to go on the air. . . . "This is a presentation of the American Broadcasting System," finished the announcer of the preceding period. The three notes of a little xylophone sounded. "WABS—New York," came the voice of another announcer.

A moment of silence—then the signal of Jim Barnes, his eyes on the clock—the clock with the red hand which swept once around the dial every minute. The orchestra began to play the opening signature of our period . . . We were on the air!

Another moment, and I was being introduced by the announcer over one mike as I stood ready and waiting with my script before another. I got as far as: "—Once you pass into the sound studio and the door closes, you are assailed, as it were, by the sensation of being cut off from the outside world . . ."

I never finished. At that instant a shot shattered through the plate glass picture window of the control room, and a steel-jacketed bullet pinged into the plaster over the head of the technician inside.

I started. That shot had been in this studio! It was not one of those revolver shots for the mike—a fingernail snapped against a piece of stiff cardboard. This one had been real.

"Ooh!—Look! Rita Flambeau!" came a sharp, staccato, terror-stricken scream from Barbara Brooks, an extra girl.

"Hold everything!" This was Kennedy's authoritative voice. "Walter, guard that door to the hall. Hold the door to the control room, Barnes.—Let no one out of this studio! I'll take charge here."

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Instantly, Kennedy was beside Rita Flambeau. She had pitched forward, and he bent over her. A thin trickle of blood was slowly spreading upon the shiny cork floor of the studio, from the beautiful blond head now motionless against a shapely white arm. Wildly outstretched fingers seemed to grasp for something spectral in the thin air.

"Bullet passed clean through, and out at the base of the brain—death practically instantaneous," Craig muttered. "Here, get back there, you people! Hold everything, I say!—Barnes, call the police and an ambulance over that studio telephone extension beside you."

"Oughtn't I to call out into the hall, Craig, have the elevators held, and have Parks, on the ground floor, stop any one who leaves the building?" I queried excitedly.

"Hardly necessary," vetoed Craig. "The murderer is here in this room!"

I realized that since the shot no one could possibly have come in or gone out through the studio door, for on the doorknob outside in the hall hung the sign, "On the Air."

"Are we still on the air, Barnes?" asked Kennedy.

Barnes nodded negatively. "No. Nixon, in the control room, has seen to that. No, they've already put on some emergency program or other, probably something electrically recorded."

HE started to do his telephoning, while I was using my best efforts to keep back the alarmed and curious people who were already pressing against the outside hall door.

"Wh-what 'll we do at Liberty Pictures, Walter?" chattered frightened little Jerry Shaw. Jerry was not only one of the cast, but also a headliner at the Club Flambeau. She added, "With the star—dead!"

I was too much in a whirl to answer. The question, of course, was just one of those strange practical twists the emotional mind sometimes takes under tense stress.

"You know—" This was from Harriet Moore, amateur in radio, but one of the featured professionals at the club and the picture studio. "All through the taking of the picture at Liberty, Neville White's been overplaying his love scenes with Rita!"

Involuntarily, I looked about to find Tom Fergus. Tom was not merely another in the cast. Tom was Rita Flambeau's husband, and the manager of the Club Flambeau. Of course I knew about the estrangement between Tom and Rita; knew well, too, how that overplaying by Neville White had fanned the flame.

Quickly I picked Tom out of the excited crowd. He was coming over toward Harriet Moore. Yes, I thought, there had been plenty of gossip during the taking of the picture about Neville's grating on Tom, and about Harriet's crush on Tom.

I ran my eye over the members of the cast to get a line on Neville White, half expecting now to find little Jerry Shaw with him, for Jerry's jealousy had been another underground topic of conversation at Liberty Pictures. They were not together, were rather at almost opposite ends of the studio room.

Suddenly Kennedy, searching the room, picked up Rita's white evening wrap, trimmed with fluffy white fur. It had been lying on a chair near me, over near the wall and beside the door. Quickly Craig ran his hand through the coat until he found a pocket. His

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face showed no surprise as he drew out a crumpled note.

I bent over with him as he read:

RITA, DEAR:
You are a real sport! With your permission, as soon as we finish this radio stunt I'm going to announce that everybody's invited over to the club. And, after that, I'm planning one of our old-time Love Fests to celebrate getting together again.
XXXXXXXXX (kisses) TOM.

"So!" I whispered to Craig. "They'd patched it up again!"

Kennedy turned, still holding the note. "How about this, Fergus?" he asked, catching the eye of the dancing man whose marriage to the torch singer had elevated him to fame.

"It's true, Mr. Kennedy," he nodded back with grave face. "We were going to announce it to-night.—But now—" He seemed to choke off the rest with suppressed emotion, an ominous scowl on his face.

I confess I did not like the man. He was one of those men whom other men do not like, as a rule. To my mind, he had been nothing but a cheap gigolo before La Flambeau took him up. Yet I could not help having a sneaking sympathy for him. Evidently he had been planning to do the right thing after all.

Just in time, I swung around to catch an interchange of hateful glances between Tom Fergus and Neville White. The hatred in the glance of each was like a rapier thrust.

"MR. KENNEDY!" The interruption was from Bob Gillen, the page boy who had been in charge of the hall door.

Craig turned. "Yes, Gillen?"

Gillen was holding something between his thumb and forefinger. "I just picked this up from the floor."

It was an exploded and ejected shell.

Kennedy took it. "High-powered cartridge, smokeless powder," he muttered, examining it.

"Craig," I whispered, "why not line them all up and search them now?"

"Just a moment, Walter. Not too sudden." He continued searching the few chairs on which had been carelessly tossed the wraps which some of the artists had not had time to leave at the check-room outside.

One wrap of rose-colored velvet had fallen in a heap on the seat of a chair. He started to lift it, but just as suddenly he let the wrap fall as it had been before, in a crumpled heap.

"Whose is this?" he asked, sharply.

"Oh, that's Jerry Shaw's present from the big butter-and-egg man from the West who was at the club last week," shrilled Harriet.

"Yes?" Craig's tone was one not so much of surprise as of putting on a show.

He lifted the wrap again. In the rose velvet folds lay one of those tiny fountain-pen guns that hold only one cartridge!

"Don't touch it!" cautioned Kennedy. "I can be sure that whoever dropped it there was too clever to leave even a little finger-print on it—but I'll keep it intact just on a chance."

"Well, of all things!" Jerry Shaw edged her way forward. "Of all the nerve! I hope you don't think that's mine, Mr. Kennedy. Why, I never saw one of the things before! Ugh!"

"Common enough in the white-light underworld, though," commented Craig.

"Why—yes—I have heard of them."

"Oh, Barnes," said Craig quietly, "take that drape off the wall over

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there. Just drop it over the body. It won't destroy any evidence—and at least it will show a little respect for the dead."

"Right-o, Mr. Kennedy."

"Jim," I asked as Barnes finished covering lightly the tragic, beautiful form, "have you finished with the telephone?"

"Yes. It wouldn't surprise me if the police were here any minute now. Headquarters put the news on the air, and any second now they'll pick up one of the cars equipped with radio."

"All the more reason for me to get busy. Won't you take this door for me while I call up the *Star?* I can't miss an opportunity to scoop the other papers."

"Now, let's see." Kennedy wheeled suddenly. "Who's here? Will you all please line up, ladies and gentlemen—along that wall over there, where the empty chairs are? You may be seated, if you please."

The atmosphere was too charged with tension for any one of them to sit down, however, and unconsciously they remained standing.

Telephoning the desk at the *Star* made it a bit easier for me to discover just who was present; besides, I could study their faces better. I muffled my voice, while continuing to scan them all—actors in the picture, some of them performers at the club, all members of the cast of this radio drama.—One of them was a murderer—or murderess! What I would have given to be a mind reader or to have had second-sight. What a beat!

I have covered a great number of the really big murder cases. It is one thing to write a murder mystery in a story, but to handle a real case—aye, there's the rub! You can't be wrong. For, if you are, it's going to be just too bad—for you. There are lawyers and courts and libel suits, to say nothing of your own job and your reputation. Here was a real mystery, right in the midst of my own fiction drama mystery!

Who was guilty? Was it Tom Fergus or Neville White? Cold, calculating Harriet Moore or impulsive, flighty little Jerry Shaw? One false move, and it might be I who would be penalized!

I TELEPHONED in a story with plenty of color—but I studiously left the deductions to Kennedy.

"Walter! — Where's Walter?" I heard Craig saying as I finished putting in my preliminary flash to the *Star* and was hanging up.

"Here I am," I called. "Over by the telephone, Craig."

"Oh, I see.—The police and an ambulance surgeon have arrived. In the control room. Will you let them in?"

Through the glass I could now see them, and I sprang to open the heavy door which Barnes had bolted and at which they were now tugging angrily.

"Watsamatter here, anyway?" growled a voice as I opened up. "Who's calling for the police and then barring the door? I've a good mind to take you all up!"

"Oh, that's all right, we— Why, it's Barney O'Connor! How are you, inspector?"

"Well, I'll be— Say, it's you, Jameson, is it? And Kennedy, too!" It was our old friend, Inspector O'Connor. "Now what're you all doing with a dead girl on the floor and the rest of them all lined up by the wall?"

"Hello, O'Connor!" greeted Craig. "Well, you are God's gift to a scientific detective at just this moment! You bring me just the authority and the organization I need most!"

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Quickly, under his breath, Craig launched into a brief account to O'Connor and the young surgeon, Dr. Kenney. He recited what had happened. They moved over, lifted the piece of drapery from the prostrate form. At the same moment, Dr. Leslie, the medical examiner, arrived.

"Well, doctor," commented Kennedy, "your presence lets us out of any further official responsibility for the body. Now I can go on with the case, and I propose to do so before it gets cold!"

"By the way, Mr. Kennedy," interrupted Harriet Moore, "what about the midnight program—if you're going to hold us all here?"

"Midnight program?" repeated Craig.

"Yes—the dance music from the Club Flambeau. You'll find it posted on the bulletin board in the hall, in case you don't know anything about it—midnight to twelve-thirty."

Kennedy looked over at Barnes, and Barnes nodded back. He smiled absent-mindedly. "Harriet's just beginning to get over as an artiste there. She would think of that!"

Somehow, I wondered if it was that.

"Harriet's a good business woman," returned Craig. But his remark left me wondering if Craig was getting the same implications out of it that I was.

Across the studio I caught a glimpse of Tom Fergus, his back to us. He was with little Jerry Shaw. Was that a look of blue dejection on Jerry's face, or was it fear? How I wished there was only some way to hear these whispered asides! Kennedy saw them, too.

Neville White, nervously giving his hands a dry wash, was pacing up and down, unable to stand still in his place in Craig's line-up. I saw him pause when he thought perhaps he was not observed. He gazed for a moment at the face of the dead girl while Dr. Leslie and Dr. Kenney compared notes for their respective reports. I fancied there was a peculiar sharpness in his look, as if he wished he had a telescopic eye that could discern what they were writing. Then he shot a quick glance at the flirtatious rival of La Flambeau, Jerry Shaw. His face clouded. At that instant he caught a glimpse of me watching him. He shrugged, and continued his tragic Thespian pacing of the floor.

"ANYTHING you wish to add to your statement just now to Mr. Kennedy, Neville?" I suggested.

He drew himself up with theatrical dignity, but I could not help feeling that he was really drawing himself into a professional shell, by which he might best conceal himself.

"No, Jameson," he replied quickly and positively. "I had nothing of value to give him. I have nothing to give you, either. In my case, nothing plus nothing equals—nothing!"

"I thought you might possibly have seen," I suggested, "or might have suspected something, that's all."

"I have seen nothing, and I suspect nothing," he explained with that same tone of finality that betrays plainly the desire not to be quizzed.

I knew now that Neville White had seen something and had suspected much. But it was plain notice he would not talk. How I longed for a piece of mental rubber hose in order to give this actor a third degree that would be within the law! My hunch was that it was within Neville White's power to clear this case—but at what expense? Was he silent on his own account—or was it because of someone else?

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Kennedy beckoned Nixon from the control room, and the radio engineer joined Kennedy and me. He seemed perturbed.

"We're getting nowhere this way," muttered Craig, "and we probably won't get anywhere!"

He paused a moment, and we could hear the futile questions of the inspector, as he interrogated one after another.

"George," whispered Kennedy to Nixon, "take Walter—get a taxi. Take the parabola to the Club Flambeau, and set it up wherever you can, under cover. How long do you think it will take?"

"Not more than half an hour after we get there."

"Good! Then I'll hold them here until half-past eleven. By twelve they will all be there, ready for the midnight program. Get busy!"

Allowed to pass out by O'Connor's say-so, we went into the corridor that led from one control room to another. I glanced at Nixon.

"The parabola? What does he mean, the parabola?"

Nixon smiled. "Oh, just a new invention we have been perfecting. You'll understand it better when you see it set up and at work."

We had come to the engineers' room, a hive of mystery to me. Nixon opened a door and switched on the light. He paused near what seemed to be a standard, built solidly of metal. On top of this, on a peculiar swivel, was what looked like a huge chopping bowl, mounted vertically. From the frame that supported this silvered chopping bowl there projected four rods, forming a square of about five or six inches, and pointed right at the center of the concave bowl.

Fastened to these rods was a square box, exactly the same as the microphones we had been using in the studio. The diaphragm, however, was pointed not outward but inward, toward the center of this chopping bowl, and some thirty inches from it.

"WALTER, you and I can carry this thing out to one of the back elevators," said Nixon, coiling the cables out of the way around the standard. "I'll get one of the page boys to lug along a couple of those boxes of tools and so forth."

We picked it up between us. It was heavy, but we lugged and panted our way with it to the elevator, rang the bell, and waited for the night man to bring it up.

"We'll make the taxi driver put his top back. I think we can steady this thing on the seat between us. That's the quickest way. We can't get any other conveyance this time of night."

The excitement being all in the front of the ABS Building, we managed to get to the street without being observed by any one except the page boy whom we had pressed into service.

"Just what is this thing, George?" I asked as we now sped through traffic toward the club. "What's it supposed to do?"

"This?" Nixon replied, holding the thing steady, with the loving embrace of an engineer. "Why, it's an electric ear. I guess that's what you might call it. We developed it here; Kennedy's been helping us put some improvements on it."

"Yes. But what does it do?" I persisted, looking up at the mike, which was pointed right into the bowl.

"You remember the political conventions this year?" replied Nixon. "Remember how some one in one of the delegations would get up, out on that

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howling floor, and make an address to the chair?"

"Yes I do. Distinctly. You couldn't hear him above the bedlam—and then all of a sudden you did hear him. Surely. It's one of the things that made those conventions different from any I'd ever listened into before. And a good many people have mentioned it to me for the same reason."

Nixon smiled and patted our inanimate fellow-passenger. "Well, this is the guy that did that—this electric ear on the radio. That big sound collector that looks like a huge bowl gathers waves from one particular point, and then reflects and concentrates them all on that mike that faces the collector. Just you wait till you hear us use it for broadcasting from the top of the Stadium or the Bowl in the football games this fall.—We'll pick up the signals down on the field, while Princeton's giving a locomotive on one side of the field and Yale's singing the 'Boola' on the other! It's great—this parabolic reflector microphone that you can focus on any sound you want to pick up!"

THE Club Flambeau was quiet. Its crowd was always the after-theater crowd, and we were ahead of it.

On a dais in one corner was the band. Not far from it, in a clump of potted palms commanding every angle of the club was a spotlight. Between the two was the ABS microphone.

Nixon went to work immediately, setting up his electric ear back of this clump of potted palms where it would be well concealed. With the name lettered on it, the instrument looked merely like more ABS equipment.

"'Kennedy has been working with us lately, adding a contrivance by which you can listen in through earphones," remarked Nixon. "I can't imagine what his idea is, but I brought along three or four of them, and I'll hook them up in this alcove. I suppose he thinks some of those in the show may do some talking. He can be so inconspicuous there that he'll be practically invisible."

"I guess you're right, Nixon," I agreed. "But in my opinion, what those birds need is a good third degree. No rough stuff, but something that will *make* them talk!"

It was almost twelve o'clock by the time Nixon completed his set-up. Only a few moments later, the entire cast arrived, headed by Kennedy and with Inspector O'Connor bringing up in the rear.

They were a sobered and worried group. By this time the club was moderately crowded with patrons. There was nothing in the atmosphere conducive to success; in fact I would never have guessed the turn events were to take.

"I want you to stay out there, pointing that parabola and operating it, Nixon," Kennedy quickly directed. "The way you've installed it is fine; they'll never suspect anything with an ABS engineer here, and I can keep under cover back in the alcove. Just keep Neville and Jerry Shaw covered, when they're together. Also, cover Harriet and Jerry and Harriet and Fergus whenever you get a chance."

"I get you."

Nixon took his position beside the parabola, where he could focus its exact center on any desired point on the club floor.

Promptly at midnight the club went on the air.

"Angel-Face" Jerry Shaw, now in costume, concluded what was usually her snappiest number with the kick of

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one wand-like leg over the head of a gentleman with jowls—a kick so unwontedly spiritless that it almost failed to miss the victim's head. Mr. Jowls started back suddenly, and overturned his glass.

The saxes wailed the finale of a rollicking ditty that should have romped *allegro vivace,* but they literally crept along, *adagio lamentoso.* That was the spirit of the occasion. It was more like an unusually dispirited wake than the liveliest mirth emporium that had so far escaped a padlock. How could it have been otherwise, when the attendance of every one of the performers had been commanded by Inspector O'Connor, who refused pointblank to allow any member of the cast to leave until he gave permission?

Unobtrusively, Kennedy took me with him into the alcove; and as yet, no one had an inkling that anything was different at the club to-night from any other night, as far as the mikes were concerned.

"I think it's a wonderful thing, this parabola," I whispered to Kennedy as Nixon spotted here and there, so that our ear phones could pick up a conversation even above the blare of the band. "But these people are just going to build a wall of silence about themselves."

He raised his hand for me to be quiet.

"YOU'RE terribly ragged to-night, Jerry."

Jerry Shaw had flopped into a chair across the table from Harriet Moore, alone in the rear.

"Hnf!" Jerry sniffed, impatiently, throwing back her cherubic little head and taking a deep pull on the cigarette that drooped so daintily from her fingers. "Oh, it's all right for you to hand out that line, Harriet," she retorted petulantly. "I guess you're sitting pretty, with Tom Fergus stuck on you—and he's boss now! . . . But how would you feel if you had just been told by that same boss that you were through?"

"*Through?*" Harriet appeared to be surprised. "I don't get you, kid."

"Why, in the hall of the dressing rooms just now he tells me I'm through! And when I ask why, he says he isn't going to have any more business spoiled by my coarse work.—Coarse work! Why, you know, Harriet, there isn't an entertainer in the place half as clever as I am. I can't make it out."

"Well, even if I don't agree with him," purred Harriet, "I think I can see his point."

"Point? Why, there isn't any one in the place who has brought in more customers than I have—and you know it!"

"You bring 'em in," admitted Harriet. "That's okay. But you also drive 'em out. It ain't getting 'em that counts — it's holding 'em!" Harriet paused. "Kid, even these saps are human. You can trim a guy to the bone, as long as you only assault his pocketbook. But when you soak him wherever it is that his romantic pride is located—why, that's different!"

"Rave on!" exclaimed Jerry. "You can sure shovel the chatter!—Maybe you're right. But I don't get you."

"It's this, Jerry." Harriet was leaning confidentially over the table. "Jerry, you're mercenary! I don't mean that's such a bad thing in itself—but you don't hide it. You knock 'em for a goal like nobody's business; you get 'em crazy about you—and then you give 'em an emotional kick in the slats."

"I never noticed that you were back-

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ward about taking them across, Harriet—even the boss!"

"Maybe not. But, Jerry, sometimes your work is awful crude. I'm not speaking of Neville White, just now. That's just a plain crush. Maybe it's all right; maybe not."

"Well, what *do* you mean, then?"

"Just this; what crabs it all is that just as soon as you've collected from a guy, you lose interest. He feels so humiliated he's ashamed to come back.—No wonder the boss don't want you to come along!"

"Look here, Harriet, that's just conversation." The angel-faced one helped herself to another cigarette. "Maybe he's afraid of me!" She paused. "Talk of the future—what am I going to do?"

"I'm coming to that, kid." Harriet's voice was confidential. "The thing for you to do is to look for a fat bankroll and quit looking for eyes like Neville's. Don't get so vicious if any one comes between you and a boy-friend. Go after an annuity!"

"Yes! A bankroll with two rolls under the chin and three under the vest!" Jerry was scornful. "He should die, I should cry—and so on!"

"Baloney, Jerry! Marriage is a business. You got a front. You got a line of talk that's ritzy like the talkies."

"Well, what's it getting me—even there?"

"NOTHING yet, Jerry. But it could. Never mind what the boss says—or why. I've a marvelous idea for you, Jerry. You're going to connect with the bankroll in a swell Florida resort I know of—where money's as common as corn in Kansas."

"Don't make me laugh!" jeered Jerry. "I can't pay the room rent I owe, let alone—"

"But I'm going to fy-nance you, dearie!—I like you, kid. I'm not forgetting for a minute how you stayed away from Tom Fergus when I was surrounding him. Of course you didn't know all I know about this Neville White—but, you let Tom alone, and I'm grateful."

"Harriet, you're immense!" It didn't take a hammer to get an idea into Jerry's pretty head. "I can get away from here. I can play the modest little girl at some swift Florida resort, and—"

"Not so fast, Jerry! Not the swift resorts. Remember, the harder the arteries, the softer the mind!"

The orchestra was tuning up for Jerry's next number.

"If you'll stake me, Harriet, I'll go. I'll grab some gay old dog who either wants to forget a misspent life or is aching to start out on one."

"It's a push-over for you, honey!" urged Harriet. "Why, one week down there and you'll come out with a bankroll the size of a wrestling star's neck!"

The prelude to Jerry's dance was ending. "Okay, Harriet!" she called back as she rose. "I'll pack to-night!"

As for me, I was studying Kennedy's face. "Do you get that?" I inquired. "Why is she so anxious to go? Did you know that Liberty's next picture starring Neville White is to be made at Palm Beach, and that they're starting to work on it next week?"

Craig did not respond, other than to raise his hand again to adjure me to silence. Through the earphones from the parabola there now came a man's voice.

"Say! Did you know that Neville's signed up with Liberty Pictures for their next production in Florida? He just told me. He's worried for fear

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he can't get away in time." The voice was Tom Fergus's.

"Sure, I knew it." Harriet lowered her voice. "Do you suppose Kennedy and O'Connor know it? Jerry Shaw's going down there, too. That 'll give Kennedy something to think about—both of 'em on their way to Florida at once! Say, Tom, I haven't had a chance yet to ask you; but that note was in your own handwriting, wasn't it?"

"Sure it was."

"Nothing on a typewriter or anything like that?"

"Certainly not! Think I'm dumb?" And then Fergus was leaving her table.

Kennedy quietly beckoned to O'Connor, and whispered to him. O'Connor walked away nonchalantly.

NIXON switched the parabola and picked up the voices of Neville White and Tom Fergus.

"What's on your mind now, Neville? I thought I caught you signaling to me with your eyes while I was talking to Harriet."

"Yes." Neville was nervous. "What's become of this Kennedy person and that yes-man of his, Jameson?"

"They're sitting just back of those palms in the alcove, with O'Connor at the table in front of them. I'm going to send a waiter in to get a line on—"

"The devil you say! There's O'Connor—he's got Harriet by the arm, taking her out into the lobby! She's putting up a bit of a fight against going, too!"

"The big flatty! What's he care how he treats a lady? I'd love to be able to give the waiters the signal for the flying wedge and out on the sidewalk for him!"

"Oh, this is awful!" groaned the actor. "It 'll all be in the papers and—Say, do you really think I ought to charter a plane and hop off down to Florida to protect Liberty Pictures? It's just going to be too bad for them, with one star dead and another held as a—a material witness, or whatever they call it!"

Kennedy poked his head out of the alcove at Nixon. "George," he whispered, "spot me when I'm talking to Tom Fergus in a minute!"

"Okay."

Craig rose, taking off his earphones. "I'll leave this end in your charge, Walter. O'Connor 'll be back in a minute." He was off.

I watched Craig worming his way through the crowd toward Tom Fergus. Nixon was rambling all over the place with the parabola.

"Move over a bit, Walter." O'Connor had slipped in before I noticed him. "There—sit there, Miss Moore. Now, girlie, just slip that thing on your head like a good little telephone operator."

He had brought Harriet Moore along with him, defiant yet afraid to disobey.

"Hello, Fergus!" That was Kennedy's voice.

"Hello."

"So—' I haven't had a chance yet to ask you. But that note was in your handwriting, wasn't it?' "

"What in the hell do you mean by that?"

"' Nothing on a typewriter or anything like that?' "

"Say—er—er—" Fergus's voice was startled because of Kennedy's verbatim repetition of his own words to Harriet.

"' Certainly not,' " repeated Kennedy. "' Think I'm dumb?' "

Fergus sputtered and stared.

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"So—you're not so dumb, eh?" pursued Craig relentlessly.

"The — little — double-crossing—tart!" ground out Fergus. "So—she squealed, eh? I s'pose you think you're gointer burn me for this, eh, Kennedy? Well, I'll see myself in hell first, you—!"

"Not so fast, Fergus!" Kennedy's iron grasp had Fergus's wrist. "You're going with me in a patrol wagon—not an ambulance or a basket.—Drop that deck of poison before—"

Harriet, by my side, had torn the earphones from her head, had sprung from O'Connor's side, overturning a palm as she did so. She was across the floor before I knew it.

'Yes — you *will* burn!" she screamed. "I squeal—? A little, double crossing tart—me? I've got your number, Tom Fergus! I heard it all! You —rat!"

"You—you heard it?" Fergus was stunned.

"Yes," ground out Kennedy, "she heard it! Murder on the mike this time is caught on the mike! I've been giving you all a third degree on the parabola over there! It 'll save you faking any charges about rubber hose against O'Connor!".

THE END.

The World's Oldest Tree

THE sacred Bo-tree in the Maha-mego Gardens of Anarajapoora, Ceylon, is in all probability the oldest historical tree in the world. It is said to have been a branch of the identical fig tree under which Gotama Buddha reclined when he underwent his deification. It can be traced to the remotest periods of Buddhism, and ancient Singhalese records bear witness to the fact that it was planted in the year 288 B. C., and hence it is now more than two thousand years old. Age after age these sacred annals record the works which successive sovereigns erected for the preservation of the Bo-tree, and the story of its vicissitudes has been preserved in a series of continuous chronicles, among the most authentic that have been handed down by mankind.

Compared with it the Oak of Ellerslie and the venerable redwoods of California are but saplings; and the Conqueror's Oak in Windsor Forest barely numbers half its years. The yew trees of Fountains Abbey are believed to have flourished there 1,200 years ago; the olives in the Garden of Gethsemane were full-grown when the Saracens were expelled from Jerusalem; and the Cypress of Soma, in Lombardy, is said to have been a tree in the time of Julius Cæsar; yet the Bo-tree is older than the oldest of these by a century, and would almost seem to verify the prophecy pronounced when it was planted, that it would "flourish and be green for ever."

Kenneth P. Wood.

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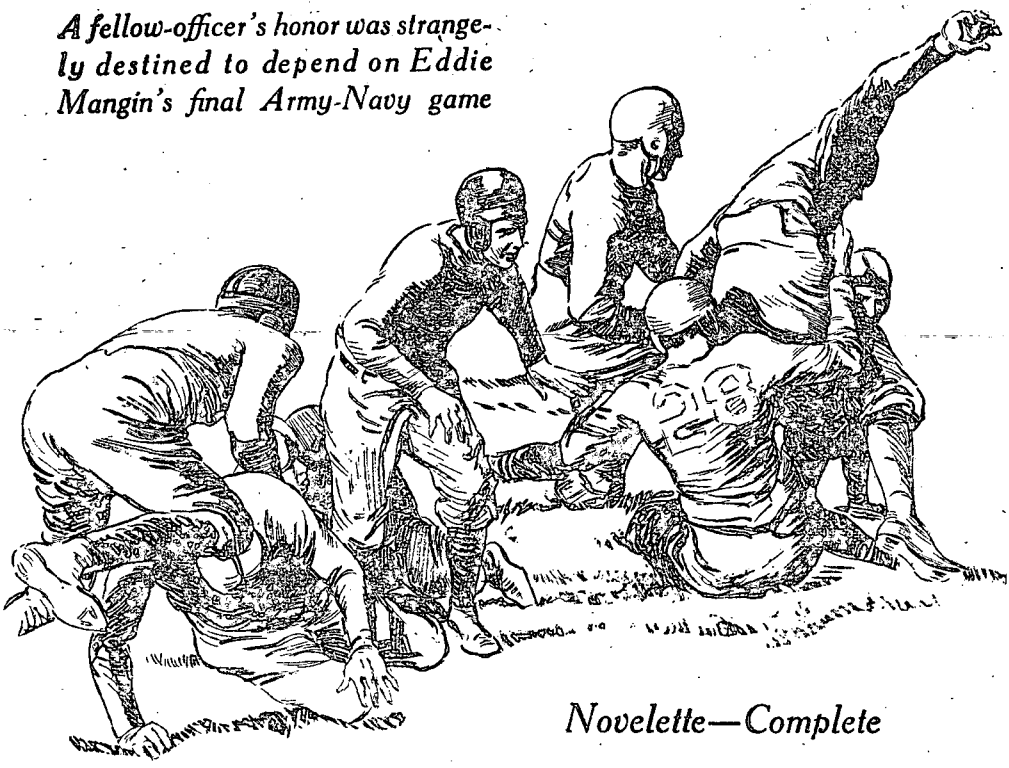
The Last Game

By LIEUT. JOHN HOPPER

Author of "'Failure Means Death!'" "Masked Death," etc.

A fellow-officer's honor was strangely destined to depend on Eddie Mangin's final Army-Navy game



Novelette—Complete

CHAPTER I.

IDOL OF THE CROWD.

THE field judge's stopwatch was ticking off the seconds with fatal rapidity. The game was in its final moments, and the score was Notre Dame 7, Army 6. The Yankee Stadium, New York City, where this grim, relentless struggle between football giants was being fought, was packed with seventy thousand people. The dull, gray November day was fading with the ending game, and the air was bitter cold.

The two teams faced each other on the Army's twenty-eight yard line. They were bruised, battered and weary. The Notre Dame eleven reminded the seventy thousand watchers of a tired, tenacious bulldog that had already secured its bone and was grimly determined to hold onto it. The Army team looked as tired, but it was desperate. Desperation was written in the tense faces of the linemen behind the ball, in the strained voice of the quarterback calling signals, in the anxious, crouching postures of the backfield.

It was Army's ball—first down. Time was flying; the last quarter was almost over. There was time for one

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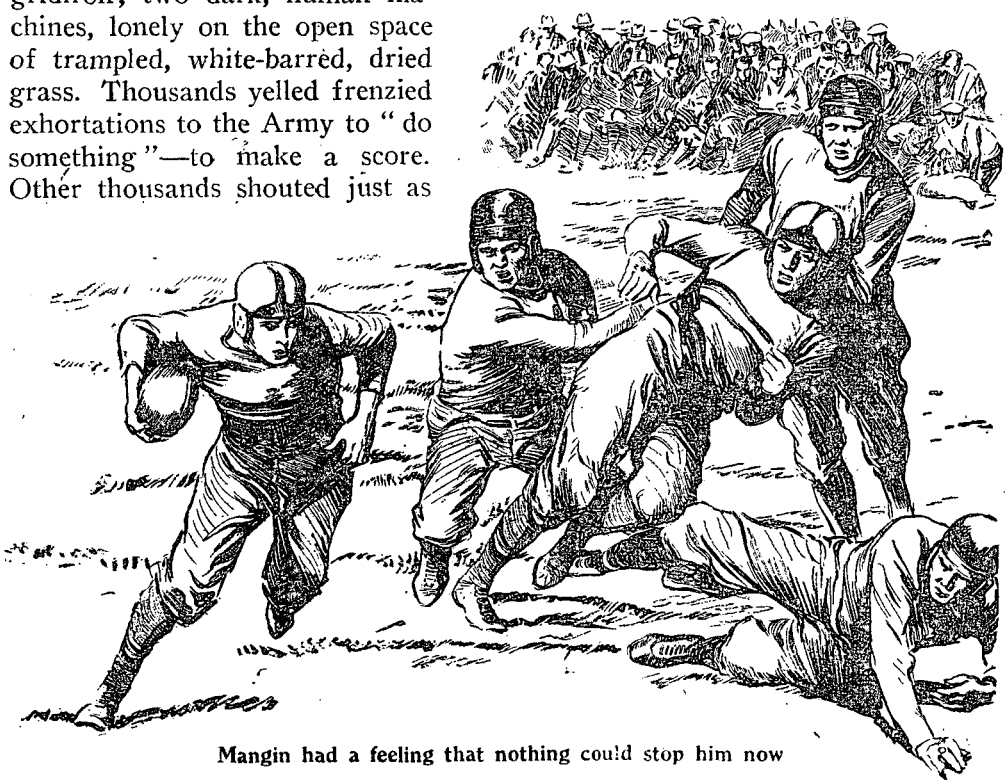
more play, possibly two plays, before the bark of the field judge's pistol would end the game.

The huge stadium was surcharged with tense excitement. The eyes of seventy thousand were riveted upon the two taut teams in one corner of the gridiron; two dark, human machines, lonely on the open space of trampled, white-barred, dried grass. Thousands yelled frenzied exhortations to the Army to "do something"—to make a score. Other thousands shouted just as frenziedly to Notre Dame to hold firm until the end, and watch for a trick play.



Mangin had a feeling that nothing could stop him now

Although the fourth period was practically over, the non-partisan spectators still hugged their seats. Usually, by this time, they were on their way out of the stadium, jamming its many aisles, leaving behind only the die-hard partisans of the opposing teams.

But now they stuck to their seats as firmly as the most rabid West Point or Notre Dame fan. This was remarkable because it looked as if the Army did not have a ghost of a chance to make a score.

One man of the twenty-two, tense, motionless figures down on the field waiting for the ball to be snapped was responsible for the last minute interest of the crowd. He was Eddie Mangin, left half-back of the Army. He was a national football hero; he was at the top of the list. He had been on the All-American twice in the last two years.

The crowd knew that no game was over, no matter what the score said, as long as Eddie Mangin was on the gridiron.

He made touchdowns when they were least expected, like a magician pulling rabbits out of a high hat. When he carried the ball, the crowd roared.

Down on the field, Eddie Mangin

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was listening intently to the Army quarter-back barking signals. The staccato numbers, translated, meant a fake forward pass; the quarter receiving the pigskin directly from center and dropping back as if to hurl a forward. In the actual development of the play, Eddie Mangin would run behind the quarter-back, take the ball from him on a backward flip, and start around left end. It was a good, foxy play, Eddie thought to himself, and Rice, the short, chunky quarter, was certainly picking the right time to pull it. The Notre Dame men were on the alert for a forward pass. What else was there to expect, when the game was in its final seconds, and the Army was behind?

The Army quarter-back was placing his last, small hope in a trick play—and on Eddie Mangin. West Point's famous left wing-back had been known to work miracles before, and in places just as tight as this.

Eddie crouched lower, hands on knees. In his gray eyes was a shrewd, determined glow. The quarter-back was mechanically speeding through the second set of numbers. The dark blue jerseys of the Notre Dame linemen were weaving nervously. The first line of defense was anxious to tear apart the Army line and break up a forward pass at the sending end.

Eddie thought only of the ball. He wanted to feel it tucked securely under his arm. He visioned himself racing around left end, dodging tacklers, changing his pace, shaking them off one after another, as the white lines dropped behind him. This time he had to get away. He knew, the team knew, the seventy thousand watchers knew, that if he didn't, it was the end for the Army.

Eddie Mangin was grimly determined to get away, not for a few yards, but for the entire seventy-two separating him from the Notre Dame goal line. He was playing his last year of football. He wanted to remember it as a year of victories, a fitting climax for his brilliant football career. He wanted the vast American football public to remember him as "Eddie Mangin, the great Army half-back, who defeated Harvard, Yale, Pittsburgh, Notre Dame, and Navy, all in one season," his last season as a football player. Harvard, Yale, and Pittsburgh already had been overcome. But now this Notre Dame team, also undefeated all season, was bidding fair to spoil Eddie Mangin's hopes.

The lines surged together suddenly, and Eddie straightened and whirled as the ball came spinning back to the quarter. Rice fell back rapidly, his arm half raised, his head up as if he were searching for some one to whom to pass the ball. The line of scrimmage became a shambles of struggling linemen. The Notre Dame backfield hesitated, not daring to charge forward until the pass was uncovered.

Mangin appeared directly behind the quarter-back, but he did not slacken his pace. At that instant, Rice flipped the ball behind him. Eddie's hands received it surely, almost lovingly. The hard, grainy feel of the leather always sent a thrill through him. In his mind, as his cleated shoes tore the sod toward left end, was a single, grim, almost exultant thought: this game is not over yet.

When it was seen that Eddie Mangin was carrying the ball, the crowd in the stadium rose to its feet like waves rolling up on a shore, and a pandemonium of sound roared over the field. In the center of the stands was the United States Corps of Cadets, a living, hysterical block of gray.

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Quickly realizing that there was going to be no pass, the Notre Dame backfield began to converge swiftly upon the threatened right end of their line.

MANGIN saw the backfield men coming, and widened his course toward the far sideline in the desperate hope that he could outrace them, and so skin past and on up the field. He soon saw that it was useless. He had started too late and from too far back. He was hopelessly cut off. Those dark jerseys, coming nearer each instant, either would force him out of bounds or nail him almost on the scrimmage line, with the pitiful gain of less than a yard.

Seventy thousand people shrieked as Eddie side-stepped one tackler and twirled out of the arms of another. But two more Notre Dame men rushed to meet him. With the sideline, they formed a pocket from which he could not escape.

Suddenly the stadium gasped. The outstretched hands of the two tacklers were actually touching him, yet he whirled free magically, and away. But there was only one direction he could take, and that was backward—toward his own goal line. All openings for advance were closed by the dark blue jerseys of Notre Dame.

Without hesitation, Eddie took the backward direction, racing dangerously, crazily, deeper into his own territory. Like a pack of bloodhounds after their quarry, the Notre Dame tacklers followed him.

In the stands, spectators forgot to yell. They clutched their programs until the knuckles of their fists showed white. Their startled, staring eyes watched Eddie Mangin running back toward the Army goal line. He left the twenty-five yard line behind him—the twenty—the fifteen—the ten—

A sickening feeling descended upon the Army supporters. The game was surely lost now. Mangin would be pulled down at any second. Instead of gaining ground, he was losing it—by the yard. Even if time permitted another play, the Army would be forced to put the ball in action with its back against its goal line—an utterly hopeless position.

But when he reached the last white line before the goal line, Eddie changed his course again. By now he was a bare half dozen yards from the sideline opposite the side of the field from where he had started his mad run.

It was then that the strategy of the wily Eddie Mangin penetrated the consciousness of the crowd. He had pulled a stunt that had one chance out of ten thousand to succeed. In fact, only an Eddie Mangin could have hoped to get away with such a desperate ruse. He had drawn the entire Notre Dame team, except the safety man, to one side of the field. Then he had staged a race with them to the opposite side of the field, gambling on the slim chance that he could outdistance them, and win by the sideline before they caught up with him.

It was going to be a matter of inches! He had started up the field again, although now he was approaching the sideline. Suspense held the gigantic crowd breathless. The Notre Dame tacklers were almost upon him. One second it looked as if they surely had him, or at least had forced him out of bounds over the sideline.

But the next second, with a shift of his hips, a twist of his supple back, a change of pace of his flying feet, and he was out in the clear, leaving behind him a jumbled mass of players, Notre

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Dame and Army indiscriminately mixed.

The stadium nearly rocked with sound as Eddie Mangin veered toward the center of the field, with ten Notre Dame men chasing him hopelessly. His knees worked like pistons in a hurry. Eddie Mangin was on his way to another spectacular touchdown. The safety man was trying to head him off, but that did not worry him. With the field before him clear, one man was easy to elude.

A few seconds later Eddie touched the ball down behind Notre Dame's goal line and the game was over. While he had been racing up the field ahead of the straggling mob of players, the field judge's pistol had exploded.

The try-for-point after touchdown resulted in failure, but it didn't matter. Bleak, white numbers on the black scoreboard in a corner of the stadium mutely marked another chapter in the football career of Eddie Mangin. Army 12, Notre Dame 7.

AMONG the crush of people blocking the aisles of the stadium after the game were two men in dark blue uniforms, whose caps bore a device of an anchor and rope embroidered in gold. Between them they escorted a pretty girl. They were the recipients of many curious glances, for the crowd probably thought it strange to see midshipmen from the United States Naval Academy attending a West Point game.

Although the midshipmen drew the eyes of the surrounding crowd, the girl between them changed the curious glances to frank, admiring stares. She wore a coat of gray squirrel, tailored smartly to her slim figure. Against the fur of her high collar her face was a small, delicately shaped oval. Its complexion was creamy, smooth and flawless, tinged with color from the excitement of the game. Her eyes were almost a jet black, widely spaced above a small, impertinent nose. The intense, lively blackness of her eyes made the soft tendrils of gold hair that escaped beneath her small blue turban seem the more surprising in contrast.

The midshipman at her right was squarely built. His broad shoulders filled his dark overcoat solidly. His rugged face could not be called distinguished for any good looks it possessed. But there was a warning quality in the direct gaze of his blue eyes. There was character in his square, prominent jaw.

The second midshipman was tall and bony. The lines of his cheek bones met in a point at his small chin. His mouth was a narrow slit, a fitting companion for his greenish eyes.

The girl affectionately squeezed the arm of the midshipman upon her right.

"Wasn't that a perfectly marvelous run?" she said enthusiastically. "You know, Dick, I'd like to meet Eddie Mangin—he's such a football hero and newspaper character. I wonder what he's like."

Midshipman Dick Glenning, who who played left half-back for the Navy varsity, glanced down at the girl humorously.

"Eddie is a darned good fellow—although he does think a lot of himself. He's quite a ladies' man, too. I could introduce you to him, but—"

Dick hesitated, smiling at the girl.

"But," he continued, "it might not be wise. You might fall for him—and then what would *I* do?"

"Silly!" laughed Peggy affectionately. "*I*, whose father is a retired Navy captain, and whose brother is a lieutenant in the Brooklyn Navy Yard,

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fall in love with the Army! Dick, how could you! And mother is going to announce our engagement in two weeks, too!"

Dick's blue eyes glowed warmly on the girl.

"I was only kidding you, Peggy!" Glancing at Midshipman Howard Brundige, on the girl's left, he continued, "What a day that is going to be for the Navy, Howard! In the afternoon, we'll lick the Army, and after the game Peggy's mother is giving a party to announce our engagement."

Glenning turned his eyes back to the girl, missing the look of intense hatred that flashed across Brundige's thin face.

"Seriously, Peggy," said Glenning, "if you'd really like to meet Eddie Mangin I can arrange it for to-night. The Army'll be having a party at the Hotel Astoria. I'll call Eddie when we get back to Broadway, and ask if we can join it. And I'll tell him I'm bringing along a Navy girl who's crazy to meet him. He'll get a big kick out of that. I'll show you, Peggy Hall, that I'm not afraid of the Army stealing my girl!"

CHAPTER II.

LADIES' MAN.

EDDIE MANGIN'S heart skipped a beat as he looked into the wide, deep, black eyes of Peggy Hall. Upon introduction, she had extended her hand to him. Touching her warm, satiny fingers, he felt a thrill shoot up his arm and down into his chest.

"Thank you, Navy!" he grinned at the two midshipmen who stood behind Peggy.

Peggy herself was astonished by Mangin's boyish appearance. Before arriving at the Hotel Astoria that night, she had pictured what a national football hero should be like. She had imagined a hulking man, with immense shoulders and massive head. He would have bushy, black eyebrows, a beetling forehead; in fact, a face that had narrowly escaped belonging to a gorilla.

But Eddie Mangin was no taller than the average man, and more slender than most. His full dress uniform of gray fitted his body snugly, showing it to be most compactly and solidly constructed. His hair was light brown in color and inclined to be unruly. His facial features were regular and clean cut, but it was his gray eyes, always glowing humorously as if he were aware of a joke of which the rest of the world was not, and his wide mouth, forever wavering on the brink of a broad smile, which made him seem really good looking.

The Hotel Astoria was the Army headquarters in New York. To-night, in honor of the Notre Dame game, the seal of the United States Corps of Cadets was hung conspicuously in the marble lobby, flanked on one side by Old Glory, and on the other by the black, gray, and gold flag of West Point.

The main ball room of the hotel had been given over to the Army for the celebration of the afternoon's victory. The party was a dinner dance. The huge room, with its white-clothed tables surrounding a dance space, presented a colorful scene. The diners were Army officers in uniforms of olive drab, men in civilian black evening clothes, and women in shimmering evening dresses. There was just a sprinkling of cadets throughout the room. The main body of the Corps had been marched from the stadium at the close

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of the game directly to the trains that would bear them to West Point. It was a rare occasion when the Military Academy officials permitted the Corps to remain in town after a game. The cadets present at this celebration were either members of the football squad, or first classmen on week-end leave.

The two midshipmen escorting the pretty girl had attracted many eyes when they had entered the room in search of Eddie Mangin. Dick Glenning and Howard Brundige had worn their full dress uniforms, which were blue, but so dark in color that they seemed black. The Naval Academy full dress coats were jackets like those of West Point, except that the former had no tails. And while the Military Academy coats possessed three vertical rows of brass buttons, the midshipmen's had only two.

Dinner was still in progress, and Eddie had been dining at a table with several teammates and their girl companions. Places were made quickly for the midshipmen and Peggy.

Eddie grinned across at Glenning.

"What brought you all the way up here from Crabtown, Dick?"

"To look the Army team over," retorted Glenning frankly. "We were playing a set-up this afternoon down at the Naval Academy, so the coach sent the first string backfield to watch the Army-Notre Dame game. Brundige doesn't play, but he got a week-end and came along, too. Peggy lives in Baltimore, and she thought she'd like to see the game also—and so here we are."

THE girl had been placed beside Eddie, and directly across the table from Glenning. Mangin leaned toward her.

"Well, what do you think of the Army?" he smiled.

"It was a marvelous game!" she replied enthusiastically. "I'm so glad you won. That was a beautiful run you made in the last minute, Mr. Mangin."

Eddie raised his elbow and leaned his chin in the palm of his hand. His steady stare disconcerted Peggy slightly, and her color heightened with embarrassment.

"Call me Eddie. Call me Eddie," he murmured confidentially.

He turned back to the midshipmen. Glenning, knowing that Peggy's head and heart were far too stanch to be affected by Eddie's reputation or his fascinating but abrupt ways, was smiling amusedly. Brundige had a curious, intent look on his face.

"You see what you're up against, two weeks from to-day," said Mangin. "I'm going to cut loose against the Navy, too. It'll be my last game of football, and I'm going to give the crowds something to remember me by."

Turning suddenly to Peggy, he continued, "You'd better join the Army, lady. It's going to be just too bad for poor old Navy."

Peggy's color deepened, which made her look more lovely than ever. She was at a loss for something to say. She had never met any one quite like Cadet Eddie Mangin. She glanced at him quickly. Was he really serious? She finally admitted that he was. There was no mockery in his gray eyes. He did not mean to offend his Navy guests by his words. That was the way he thought. He expected to beat the Navy, and he would be honestly astonished if he knew that any one, including the Navy, held differing opinions.

At that moment the orchestra launched a popular dance number. Eddie rose to his feet with alacrity, and with sparkling eyes asked Peggy to dance with him.

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The half-back found her as light as a willow wand, and as thrilling an armful as it had ever been his luck to possess. He glanced down at her shining gold hair, little tendrils of which were lightly touching his chin. His heart swelled disturbingly beneath his tight gray jacket. Of all the girls I've met, of all the girls I've thought I was in love with, he was telling himself, this one has them all stopped. An afterthought came to him that it was a pity she associated with the Navy. However, he comforted himself by thinking that probably she had never met any Army men, particularly Eddie Mangin.

Back at the table, Dick Glenning and Howard Brundige were watching them. Dick's rugged face was relaxed and smiling. Brundige's thin features were sullen.

"They certainly look well together," remarked Dick approvingly. "I think the West Point full dress is a little snappier than ours. But maybe it's the way Mangin wears it."

"I don't like that guy!" replied Brundige sourly. "Look at how tightly he's holding her! Dick, you were a sap to bring Peggy over here."

The dance ended, and Peggy and Eddie were lost from sight in the shuffle of couples returning to their tables.

EDDIE MANGIN led Peggy through the main entrance of the ballroom into a mirrored hall decorated with palms and potted ferns, and furnished with sofas, gilded chairs and tables.

Chatting rapidly, holding Peggy's attention, Eddie steered her to a sofa, which was neatly screened from passing observation by a group of palms and ferns. When they were seated, Peggy interrupted him.

"We can't stay out here, Eddie! We should go back to the rest. Dick will wonder what happened to me."

Mangin grinned, and slid his arm in back of her across the top of the sofa.

"Wait a minute, Peggy! I just want to tell you something."

"Yes?"

Her dark eyes gazed at him steadily. She looked more self-possessed than she felt. Her heart was bumping in her chest. She knew the symptoms. Eddie Mangin was going to make love to her. She admitted ruefully to herself that he was the fastest worker she had ever met. He had escorted her from the ballroom after the dance so smoothly and rapidly that she was unaware of his object until she had found herself beside him on the sofa. She wondered in panic what she could do to get him to take her back to the table.

"You're the most beautiful girl I've ever met!" continued Eddie warmly. "And I've met a lot of girls, lady! You shouldn't be wasting your time with the Navy."

Peggy sat very rigid as his arm carelessly encompassed her shoulders.

"Listen," he whispered, "I like you."

He drew her to him suddenly, his lips seeking hers. Peggy struggled out of his strong arms, her fury lending her strength. She jumped up, but he was on his feet just as quickly. Her dark eyes flashed as the flat of her hand met the side of his face with a resounding crack.

"You've got your nerve!" she cried. "Who do you think you are—Napoleon? I'm a Navy girl, and I'm proud of it! And if all Army men are like you, I hope I don't meet any more!"

Her anger left her out of breath and trembling. She saw the red marks her fingers had left on his face, and she was

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glad. She saw the wonder and admiration in his eyes, and was puzzled. She saw his mouth parted in a grin, and she detested him.

"By golly!" he breathed, his eyes shining as if he had just witnessed a miracle. "By golly, you're the first girl who ever did that to me!"

She flung her head up contemptuously.

"Perhaps they all cared more for football than I happen to, *Mister* Mangin. Now if you'll please let me pass—"

He made no effort to detain her, but he turned quickly to catch up with her.

"Where're you going?" he demanded.

"I'm going to get Dick and Howard, and then we're leaving. I've had all the Army I can stand for one evening."

"Oh, but you can't do that!" cried Eddie "Say, we're just getting acquainted!"

A FEW minutes later, two midshipmen, a cadet and a lovely blond girl in a gray squirrel fur coat stood on the steps of the Hotel Astoria, waiting for the hotel starter to secure a taxi from the maze of Broadway traffic. The men were talking pleasantly about football. The girl was silent. On the exterior she was cold and detached; within she was boiling with emotion.

Peggy had gone back to the table and said that she was tired. Dick Glenning had been surprised, but when she had said that she thought she had better go out to Brooklyn, where she was staying for the night with a naval officer and his wife, friends of her brother, he had offered no objection.

Peggy had been pleased with the success of her ruse. She had had no intention of g o i n g to Brooklyn this early, but she had wanted to escape from Eddie Mangin's egotistical presence. Once out of the Hotel Astoria, she, Dick and Howard could seek pleasanter amusement. But the detestable Eddie had spoiled even this improvised means of escape.

"I guess I'll go along with you," he had said suddenly. "This party 'll be pretty flat without you, lady. I don't mind a taxi ride, even if it is to Brooklyn. The fresh air—and your company," he had grinned, "will do me good."

There had been no escape. Dick himself, so stupid about some things, and so dear in so many others, had cordially acquiesced to Eddie Mangin's accompanying them.

On the Astoria's cold stone steps Peggy stood next to the window of a florist's shop and angrily tapped a small foot. Here she was, going home at nine o'clock, the very beginning of a perfectly good evening, all on account of a big-headed, girl crazy, Army football player! She decided she hated Eddie Mangin more than anybody she had ever met.

The taxi ride to Brooklyn was long and cold. Peggy sat between Eddie and Dick, while Howard occupied a jump seat.

Eddie Mangin was easily the life of the party. He recounted in detail his successful plays of the season. He told Dick and Brundige the number of touchdowns by which the Army was going to beat the Navy. He also informed them why the Army was going to win; the main reason apparently was because the Navy had no Eddie Mangin.

Peggy suspected that he was talking for her benefit. She tightened her small mouth and tried to imagine the pleasant picture of a stretcher bearing Eddie

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Mangin's corpse off the field in the forthcoming Navy game.

CHAPTER III.

THE WINGS OF DEATH.

THE taxi finally deposited them in front of a modest apartment house on a quiet street of residential Brooklyn. Although Peggy's brother, Lieutenant (JG) Bob Hall, was stationed at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, congested housing conditions there had forced him to find quarters outside the Yard.

In this building he had rented a small apartment consisting of three rooms. Other Navy people, also unable to obtain government quarters at the Yard, rented apartments in the same building. As Bob Hall was a bachelor, and did practically no housekeeping, Peggy had been invited by a young Navy couple to spend the week-end with them in their apartment upstairs.

By now Peggy had reconciled herself to accepting the evening as a failure. She led the way into the building, and as the elevator was taking them up to her brother's apartment, she turned to the three men.

"We'll stop off at Bob's. He may have something in the ice box to make sandwiches with. I'll make coffee."

"What could be sweller?" grinned Eddie Mangin.

But apparently Peggy's brother was not home. She pressed the apartment buzzer a number of times, and received no answer. Finally she took a key from her purse.

"I guess Bob is out," she remarked. "But he gave me a key this afternoon and said that I could help myself to anything in the place if he wasn't at home."

She opened the door, and they stepped into a living room. It contained comfortable but inexpensive furniture. Naval lieutenants, junior grade, are not highly paid. On the wall opposite the door was a large banner, with the letters NAVY in gold upon a field of dark blue. The other walls bore etchings of sailing ships, and prints of modern men-of-war.

There was a lighted lamp on a library table in the center of the room. In a large chair beside the table sat a young man, apparently asleep. He wore no coat, but his dark blue trousers, white shirt and black tie indicated that he was in partial uniform. The light from the reading lamp fell on his hair, blond like his sister's, only not quite as golden or as curly.

"Bob!" cried Peggy in astonishment. "I thought you weren't home! You didn't answer the door."

The naval officer in the chair did not stir.

"Bob!" cried his sister more loudly. "Wake up!"

She approached him, wondering how he could sleep so soundly. It was not like him. Then she noticed his face, twisted in torture, and saw the brown stains on his chin and shirt.

She uttered a sudden, short, terrorful scream.

"*Bob!*"

The two midshipmen and the cadet had remained by the door, hesitating to enter the room until Peggy had awakened her brother.

Now, at her scream, they leaped across the room.

Dick Glenning was at her side first.

"Darling! What's the matter?" he demanded anxiously.

"Look at him!" she cried. "Something has happened to him! Something terrible has happened to him!"

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Eddie Mangin caught a glint of glass on the carpet beside the chair. It was just below the naval officer's hand, which was hanging lifelessly down from the arm of the chair. He picked it up, and his eyebrows drew together as his gray eyes read the label on a small, empty bottle: Tincture of Iodine —Poison.

Remembering the brown stains on the officer's mouth and shirt, it was simple for Eddie to put two and two together. His brain was working fast, the same brain which enabled him to make instantaneous, accurate decisions on the gridiron.

He took Bob Hall's wrists between his fingers, and thrilled as he felt very faint and slow pulsations. Then he whirled on Dick Glenning.

"This man has taken poison—iodine! Find some milk somewhere, here—anywhere, but make it snappy!

"You"—he faced Brundige, whose greenish eyes were staring out of a white face at the naval officer—"beat it out and get a doctor!"

GLENNING hurried in from the kitchen with almost a full quart of milk that he had found in the ice box. Eddie seized it eagerly.

"Take her into the next room!" he snapped at Glenning.

There was no doubt about who was in command of the situation. Midshipman Dick Glenning obeyed Cadet Eddie Mangin's orders unquestioningly.

But Peggy refused to leave her brother. She stood a few feet from the chair, her fingernails digging into her palms, her dark eyes wide, staring, and full of dread, while Eddie and Dick forced the milk down Hall's throat.

Several minutes later Eddie stepped back from the chair and grimly surveyed the naval officer.

"I think he'll come around. We just got here in time. That damned doctor ought to be here by now!"

Eddie seemed thoughtful for a minute. Then he turned to Peggy.

"Your brother keep any liquor around here?" he demanded.

"Yes," the girl replied tremblingly. "Out in the kitchen—in the cupboard."

Eddie returned from the kitchen with a tumbler of whisky. He forced some of it into the naval officer's mouth. Taking a step backward, he then flung the rest of the whisky on the officer.

He was placing the empty glass on the table when Peggy faced him with her eyes blazing.

"Do you know what you're doing, you—you brute!" she cried hysterically. "Are you crazy?"

She began to sob wildly.

Eddie lifted her chin gently, forcing her to look at him. His gray eyes and his smile were sympathetic.

"Listen, little lady. Eddie Mangin never does crazy things. When he does something, you can put it down in the book that there's a reason. Your brother was drunk, see, when he took that stuff. He thought it was something that would sober him up, but he was so drunk that he got the wrong bottle. I don't know why he tried to commit suicide, and it's none of my business anyway. But I do know that we're going to stick to this drunk story when the doctor comes. It is one thing to drink poison accidentally, when a guy is too plastered to know what he's doing. But it's another thing to drink poison cold sober—which is what your brother did. It would make a nasty scandal if it hit the papers. It would ruin his career in the Navy."

"Eddie's right, Peggy!" assured Glenning earnestly. "I'm glad he

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thought of it. It—it certainly would look bad if anybody knew about it."

At that moment Brundige and a small bespectacled gentleman carrying a black bag burst into the apartment. The doctor examined Hall, then ordered him carried into the bedroom. Peggy and Glenning remained in the bedroom with the doctor, while Eddie and Brundige returned to the living room.

"I had a helluva time finding a doctor," said the midshipman. "Had to chase all the way down to the next block before I saw a sign in a window.

"Do you think," he added anxiously, "that Bob will pull through? I—I wonder why he did it?"

"Drunk," said Eddie shortly.

Silence fell between the two men as they waited for the door of the bedroom to open. Eddie began to roam around the room, gazing interestedly at the pictures of ships on the walls.

Brundige remained standing by the table, one hand toying nervously with a cigarette box. His eyes fell upon a long, white envelope under the lamp. He cocked his head to peer at it, and saw that it was addressed to Peggy Hall.

Brundige threw a quick, cautious look at Eddie, whose back was turned at the moment. Then the midshipman's hand slid silently across the table until it gained possession of the letter. Brundige glanced at the West Pointer again, and found that Eddie's back was still turned. The cadet seemed absorbed in a print of a gray dreadnaught under full steam cutting through mountainous seas.

To Brundige's intense satisfaction, the envelope had been carelessly sealed. Separating the flap from the rest of the envelope, he began to extract the contents of the letter.

Suddenly a hand reached across his shoulder and took the letter with its contents. Exceedingly startled, Brundige whirled to look into the calm face of Eddie Mangin.

Eddie glanced at Peggy's name on the envelope, and then he raised his eyes to gaze curiously at Brundige.

"This letter is not for you."

A wild, trapped look flashed into Brundige's green eyes.

"I didn't notice any name on the envelope!" he lied with a rush. "It was open. I—I thought it might have something to do with what Bob did, so I—so I—"

At that moment the bedroom door opened, and Peggy, followed by Dick Glenning, entered the room. She saw the two men standing beside the table, and immediately sensed that something was wrong.

"What's the matter?" she cried. "What's happened?"

"NOT a thing," assured Eddie easily. He glanced quizzically at Brundige. "We found this envelope on the table." Handing her the letter, he continued, "It's addressed to you. It might have something to do with your brother, and maybe you ought to keep it confidential."

The girl skimmed quickly through its bulky contents. Eddie Mangin, who was watching her keenly, saw her face pale. Her hands were trembling when she slipped the letter into the bosom of her dress.

She raised her head finally, and strove to speak in a steady voice to the three men watching her.

"It's all right. It's—it's nothing. Just a letter."

Eddie's admiration for her increased. He sensed that she had re-

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ceived a blow, but she was taking it like a thoroughbred.

"How is your brother?" he asked, to break the uncomfortable silence.

"The doctor says he'll live," replied Peggy bravely, blinking back her tears. "He's practically out of danger now." She looked at Eddie Mangin. "There is no use in your staying any longer, Mr. Man—Eddie. Dick and Howard will stay here to-night. They don't have to be back at the Naval Academy until to-morrow. But you probably have to go back to the football squad."

"Yep, I do," agreed Eddie. "The coach keeps pretty close tabs on us. He's probably up in the air now, wondering where I am."

Peggy walked to the door with him. "Thank you, Eddie," she murmured, giving him her hand. "You've been wonderful. In fact"—she smiled tremulously—"if you hadn't tried to kiss me, I wouldn't have got here until late to-night. It—it would have been too late."

"I knew you were trying to get away from me," Eddie grinned at her brazenly. "That's why I came home with you—to punish you."

"I'm glad you did. And—and I'm sorry I slapped your face—so hard. But I'm engaged, Eddie, to Dick."

Eddie raised her left hand and examined the third finger.

"I don't see any sign of it," he said pointedly. "No class miniature, no solitaire?"

"It doesn't make any difference," she smiled. "I'll have one two weeks from now. After the Army-Navy game. We're planning to announce it then."

Eddie's gray eyes were dancing, and his wide mouth was parted in a broader grin than ever.

"Two weeks? Why, say, lady! In two weeks you'll be wondering why you wasted so much of your life on the Navy. After we lick the Navy, you are g o i n g to be celebrating my last game of football—with me, sister. Okay?"

Grinning at her, he swung the capes of his gray overcoat behind him. Then he strode down the hall to the elevator, just escaping swaggering by the slightest margin.

Peggy stared after him with her shapely eyebrows pulled down to a puzzled frown. She caught herself wondering how a man could be so confounded conceited and yet so actually likeable! Apparently he had as much regard for other men's girls as he had for the abilities of enemy football teams.

CHAPTER IV.

THE NOTE.

LIEUTENANT BOB HALL recovered rapidly from the consequences of his rash act. By Monday afternoon he had deserted his bed and was resting in the big chair beside the library table in the living room. There were dark shadows underneath his eyes, and his ordinarily pleasant, youthful face was creased with lines of strain. Deep in his eyes was a haunted look as he gazed at his sister, who was seated in a rocking chair across the room.

Although the two midshipmen had been obliged to return to Annapolis Sunday, Peggy had not gone to her home in Baltimore, preferring to remain in Brooklyn until assured of her brother's complete recovery.

She was reading aloud from a morning newspaper, which was spread across her lap.

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"There's a lot of stuff about the Army-Navy game," she said, turning to the sports pages. She uttered an amused exclamation, and held up the paper for her brother to see.

"Here's my tempestuous boy friend, looking as natural as in the flesh!"

The most prominent item on the page was a picture of Eddie Mangin in football uniform. He was gazing out of the printed page with a broad grin. Above the picture was the caption:

CAN NAVY STOP HIM?

Peggy glanced at her brother, and her face straightened. He was staring at nothing on the far wall, his eyes containing that desperate, hunted expression which she feared. She laid the newspaper aside and asked quietly:

"What are we going to do, Bob?"

The naval officer's tragic gaze jerked across the room to her face. He spoke in a whispering, pained voice. His throat was still raw from the effects of the iodine.

"You've read the letter I left on the table for you?"

Peggy winced. Read it? Its terrible contents were etched on her brain forever! The long, white envelope had contained the insurance policy of Lieutenant (JG) Robert M. Hall, U. S. N. The policy had been for ten thousand dollars, payable to Elizabeth Hall. But it was not the insurance policy Peggy was thinking of; it was the letter that had accompanied it. It read as follows:

DEAREST PEGGY:

I am in a terrible jam, and this is the only way out. A suicide is infinitely better than disgrace. Our dad could stand the one, but not the other. He graduated from Annapolis and served thirty-four years in the Navy. You know as well as I that it was his whole life, and still is his heart and soul. That is why I cannot let myself be kicked out of the Navy in disgrace. It would embitter the last years of his life, and finally kill him. But if I drink this stuff, you can straighten everything out, and he will never know. He will feel badly because of the way I died, but the hurt will be softened a little by my burial *with full naval honors.*

It is all a matter of money. As you know, part of my duties at the Yard consisted of running a sort of store for the enlisted personnel. I had a chief petty officer for assistant. His name was Benson, John Benson. Some months ago I discovered that he was about five hundred dollars short in his accounts. He admitted to me that he had embezzled the money, but begged me not to expose him. He promised to replace the money from his pay. I believed him, and took a chance on him. He was not a bad C. P. O., and, besides, he had a wife and two children.

Day before yesterday he disappeared. He had gone to the bank where the store's funds are kept and drawn out five thousand dollars with an official check, to which he had forged my name.

Nobody knows about this yet, but I could not hope to keep it secret much longer. The accounts are liable to inspection at any time by higher authorities. It was fairly easy to hide the five hundred dollar shortage for Benson, but it would be impossible to cover up the loss of five thousand. When what has happened became known I would have been tried by court-martial. It wouldn't have mattered that I did not take a penny of the money myself. I would have been found guilty of covering up Benson, and of gross negligence paving the way for the embezzlement of five thousand dollars of semi-official funds. The court-martial could do but one thing: dismiss me from the Navy in disgrace.

I've been nearly mad, Peggy. I searched everywhere for Benson, but he has vanished completely. I've tried every way I know to borrow the money, but failed. There are only this little, brown bottle, and my insurance policy left. When you get the ten thousand, go and see the commandant of the Yard. Give him the five thousand dollars, and he will fix everything up. Thank God there are gentlemen in the Navy! Only the commandant and you will ever know, and he will never tell.

God bless you, sis, and good-by! This is going to be tougher on you than any-

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body, but you've always been my pal, and I guess you'll see your big brother through this last time, won't you?

BOB.

This letter had been on Peggy's mind constantly since the nightmarish moment she had read it Saturday night. But she had said nothing to her brother about it, waiting until he had recovered from the worst effects of the poison, and giving him time to secure control of himself. Now, at last, they were face to face with the awful problem.

CROSSING the room rapidly, she knelt beside his chair and put her arms around his neck.

"Tell me—tell me, Bob," she pleaded, "that no matter what happens, you will never try—try again to kill yourself!"

She shuddered, and rested her small, golden head upon his breast.

Bob Hall patted her slim shoulder gently. His eyes, fastened upon the far wall, were full of pain.

"But—but we've got to get the money, Peggy," he whispered. "We've simply got to! I can't let dad in for a thing like this. He's so darned proud because I graduated from Annapolis, too. He thinks there's nothing else in the world like the old Navy. It's been about the only happiness in his life."

Peggy slumped down to the floor at her brother's feet. Her dark eyes were smoldering and resentful.

"I know," she said with bitterness. "It's mother. She never will get over the fact that he wasn't made an admiral before he retired. He knows it, and it makes him unhappy. He never wanted to be an admiral anyway. He was satisfied with the command of a ship instead of a fleet. But mother could never see it that way. She has never forgiven him because he didn't lift her up to the rank of an admiral's wife.

"And now that dad is on the retired list and out of the running," Peggy continued with more bitterness, "she's settled her ambitions upon me. She'd like to have me marry Howard Brundige, because his family has money, and money means political influence, and having political influence is the easiest and surest way of becoming an admiral. She's determined to have an admiral in the family, by hook or—"

Peggy suddenly ceased speaking. Then she jumped to her feet and looked down at her brother.

"Howard!" she exclaimed. "Why didn't I think of it before? He'll get the money for us."

Bob Hall did not answer for a moment. His face retained its tired lines.

"Peggy," he whispered slowly, "if you borrow as much money as that from Brundige, you won't be able to escape without promising to marry him. It sounds impossible to you, Peggy, but I'm telling you that you'd find yourself at the altar with him next June when he graduates. He'd make you feel that you were the worst person in the world because you took his money when you needed it, and then reciprocated his kindness by breaking his heart. And you'd fall for it, Peggy. I know you.

"You couldn't tell him what you wanted the money for; I wouldn't let you. I don't trust him. It's a shame he's getting through the Naval Academy, but it seems that there's got to be a bad egg once in a while. He's been over to the Yard quite a few times to see me, when he's been on leave. Not that he cares a rap about me, but I happen to be your brother. He probably thinks that it helps."

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The naval officer shook his head.

"No, Peggy, that's out. I'm the only one who's going to pay for my folly. If you ever get to be an admiral's wife," concluded Bob, attempting a smile, "the admiral will be Dick Glenning. He's the man for you, Peggy."

"I know it, Bob," she said softly. "Dick is wonderful. I love him."

They both were silent for several minutes, when Peggy suddenly snapped her fingers.

"I've got it, Bob! I've got it!" she cried.

Her brother looked at her in wonder.

"What now, Peggy?"

"Remember that money Aunt Lucy left me when she died a year ago? It was about three thousand dollars, and I've got around two thousand left. Bob, I'm going to bet it on the Army-Navy game! On the Navy to *win!* The odds are three to two in favor of the Army. And don't three and two make five?"

Bob Hall gazed at his sister suspiciously. He wondered if this terrible business was not destroying her good judgment, as it had destroyed his.

"You'd only lose your two thousand, Peggy! The Army's sure to win!"

She snatched the discarded newspaper from the floor, and held it aloft dramatically. Eddie Mangin's picture grinned down at her brother.

"You see that?" she cried. "'Can Navy Stop Him?' Maybe the Navy can't. But *I* can—and I'm going to!"

CHAPTER V.

EDDIE STRIKES A BARGAIN.

THE following evening, after the Corps of Cadets had returned from supper in its new mess hall, the huge, gray stone building dedicated to Washington, which stood between old South Barracks and the newer North Barracks, Cadet Eddie Mangin received with his mail a letter addressed to him in unfamiliar, feminine handwriting.

He had picked up the letter, along with a half dozen others bearing his name, from the table in the orderly room of C Company's Division of South Barracks. Even the most persistent "snake" in the Corps could hope to receive no more than one or two letters a day, and at times had to face the gloom of a letterless day. But the mail call never sounded across the Area of Barracks that Eddie Mangin did not get from four to six letters.

Not a few of the letters were inscribed by feminine hands. There were quite a number of young ladies eager and willing to do homage to a football star, and Eddie, with pleasure, found time to exchange letters with all comers.

But a strange letter always excited him. Such letters usually turned out to be fan mail, and they were always interesting. If properly answered, they were certain to produce a photograph in time.

Eddie issued from the orderly room and walked down the hall to the narrow stairs that led to the second floor. A number of cadets were lolling about in the doorways of their rooms, catching the last opportunity for social intercourse before the bugle in the Area sounded "Call to Quarters," sending each man scurrying to his own room for a night of study.

Although he was hailed by several voices, Eddie continued up the stairs. Arriving upon the second floor landing, he turned into the first room on his left. Here he lived with Bill McAllister, a bony, sallow, saturnine cadet from Texas, who had once been a cowboy,

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and was aiming for the cavalry upon graduation.

Bill had not arrived yet, so Eddie took a red comforter from the white, iron, single bed in his alcove, and draped it around a wooden armchair, thus providing padded comfort which the Academy regulations did not prescribe. He unbuttoned his dress coat, which was plain to severity in contrast with the glittering full dress jacket, and shoved his cap on the back of his head. Settling himself comfortably in the chair and swinging both feet up on top of a green study table, he opened the strange letter and read:

DEAR EDDIE:

My brother has almost fully recovered, and I am leaving here to-morrow. It has occurred to me that perhaps you could take leave this coming week-end, and visit me in Baltimore. I see by the Army schedule that you are playing an easy game Saturday at West Point. Don't you think that you could convince the coach that he will not need you? Even if he says no, why not come after the game? You can fly down from New York in almost no time at all.

I have been thinking things over, and have decided that perhaps I should know a little more about the Army—and Army men. I've been so utterly Navy, you know. Any everything was so sudden Saturday night at the Astoria!

I shall be terribly disappointed, Eddie, if you don't come. I really mean it. So I'm planning on seeing you.

Most sincerely,

PEGGY HALL.

EDDIE'S feet came flying off the table. He stood up and flung his cap into the alcove onto his bed out of sheer exuberance.

At that moment Bill McAllister appeared in the doorway. He surveyed his roommate's joy sourly.

"Whoops!" greeted Eddie.

"I know it's a girl," said Bill glumly, shaking his head.

"Girl!" cried Eddie, waving Peggy's letter triumphantly in the air. "That's no name for her, Bill! She's marvelous; she's gorgeous; she's wonderful!"

Bill was unbuttoning his dress coat.

"Yeah, I know," he interrupted dryly. "So were the other sixty!"

Eddie was pacing excitedly up and down the room.

"But I'm serious this time, Bill! Honest, this one's a knockout!

"I had a hard time making her like me," he added, with a sigh. "But I knew she'd fall for me finally."

Bill hung up his dress coat in a green wall locker and sat down at his study table. He pulled a green eyeshade out of the drawer and opened a book on engineering.

"Yeah, I know," he said sarcastically. "They all do—finally."

He suddenly closed the book with an emphatic snap. Waggling a pencil at his roommate, he continued grimly:

"This is no time for you to be falling in love again! All you should have on your mind right now is the Navy game."

"The Navy game!" Eddie was grinning. "Huh, it'll be a pushover!"

Bill McAllister gritted his teeth. He thought more of Eddie Mangin, for all his conceited cockiness, than any man on earth. They had been roommates from plebe year. But there were times when Eddie's bravado got in his hair like nobody's business.

"Don't flatter yourself, you grinning baboon! Navy's out to win this year like they've never been before. There's too much intangible stuff in an Army-Navy game. Spirit, some people call it. And no matter what the prospects may look like on paper beforehand, the weaker team is just as liable to push the stronger all over the gridiron, like a whipped hound turning into

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a wolf and chasing the bulldog all over the gridiron.

"Now if you're going to wind up that mad football career of yours in a blaze of glory, you'd better get this *femme* off your mind, whomever she may be! I've seen you get this way over others, and it never amounted to a darn. This one won't either."

But Eddie Mangin wasn't even listening. He was standing with his chin cupped in his hand, a half-grin on his face, a thoughtful look in his eyes.

"If the coach lets me out of the game Saturday, I can be in New York by two o'clock at the latest. I wonder what time I'll be able to catch a plane for Baltimore."

SATURDAY night found Cadet Eddie Mangin in Baltimore, in the living room of Captain Hall, U. S. N., Retired. The lights had been turned low, and Peggy and Eddie sat on a divan before a white-manteled fireplace, on whose hearth several logs were burning, their flickering flames causing dancing shadows in the intimate gloom of the room.

Peggy was staring at the crackling logs, thinking of her problem. There were two ways of securing the money to save her brother. One was through Midshipman Howard Brundige; the other by making use of Eddie Mangin.

The first way she did not want. She was human, and in love with Dick Glenning. She realized that the second way was dishonest, but she selected it as the lesser of two evils. She was a woman, and women accept trickery when necessary to save those they love.

It was only necessary to hoodwink Eddie until after the game. Then she could make him understand that her love had inexplicably cooled for him, and send him on his way. She admitted to herself that it was ruthless, but she salved her conscience by saying that his monumental conceit really deserved the trick.

It was getting late, and Peggy knew that it was time to begin her game. She rested her small golden head against the firm gray shoulder of Eddie's full dress coat.

The effect was all that the most exacting of vamps could have asked for. His arm tightened around her slim shoulders, and his voice became husky and low.

"Peggy, I'm crazy about you! Honest, I am! I fell in love with you the minute I saw you at the Astoria."

Now was the time, thought Peggy, to see if she had any acting ability.

"You shouldn't say these things to me!" she murmured tensely. "I'm—I'm engaged!"

"Break it, Peggy! You know you don't care for him now—after meeting me."

Eddie was intoxicated by her nearness and beauty. He hardly knew what he was saying, nor did he care.

"Become engaged to me instead," he begged. "Of all the girls I've ever met, you're the only one I've fallen for this hard."

"That's the trouble, Eddie," she said quietly. "All those other girls. How do I know you don't tell them the same thing you're telling me? After all, I've only known you since Saturday."

"But, Peggy!" he cried, "I swear you're the only girl in the world for me! I really mean it!" he insisted. "I'd do anything to prove it to you!" he added desperately.

Her heart leaped, and she turned toward him slowly.

"You can prove it," she said in a low voice.

"How? What can I do?"

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"Give up football. Don't ever play again."

The silence that followed her request was impressive.

"Why?" he asked finally.

Peggy realized that this was the moment to begin acting in earnest.

She flung her arms tightly around his neck, and placed her head so that her soft, golden hair would be in his face.

"Because, Eddie, I'm afraid! I keep thinking of last Saturday! Every one of those Notre Dame men was out to get you. When I remember the way they knocked you down and piled up on you," she shuddered, "I almost grow sick. Eddie, I—I can't face it again. If you really loved me, you wouldn't ask me to."

Eddie's heart was doing tricks in his chest. She loved him! But she couldn't really be serious about asking him to give up football!

"Aw, don't be silly, Peggy!" he grinned. "Nothing serious has happened to me so far, and I guess nothing will. Saturday's my last game anyway."

"It's always in the last game," said Peggy, tensely, "that something happens!"

"What about Dick Glenning? You're engaged to him—and he plays football."

"I know," Peggy replied calmly. "But—you're not Dick Glenning."

Eddie knew what she meant. Naturally she must never have cared very much for Glenning, or she wouldn't have switched her affections so easily.

He shook his head.

"I can't desert the team, Peggy."

Peggy's heart dropped in her breast.

"All right, Eddie," she said, in a hard, curious voice. "If football means more to you than I do—well, I guess it's the end."

"How do I know you're not kidding me?" he demanded harshly. "How do I know that you don't want me to play in the Navy game for a good reason—a good, Navy reason?"

"Eddie!" Her dark eyes showed hurt. She shrugged her shoulders hopelessly. "If I could prove it to you—!"

"You can," replied Eddie grimly. "Annapolis is near Baltimore. We'll go down there to-morrow—and you can break your engagement to Glenning."

The moment Eddie said those words, he regretted them. If she took him up, it would place him in the position of doing what she asked, or revealing himself as a bad sport. Although Pegy Hall was most desirable, he could not desert the team for her.

Peggy's eyes flickered. This was something she hadn't foreseen. She hadn't intended to tell Dick of her pseudo engagement to Mangin. She couldn't. Dick would never stand for trickery. But there was her father, and her brother.

Peggy Hall smiled evenly.

"All right."

Eddie Mangin swallowed thickly. He had led himself into the trap, and now he felt that he could not walk out. It would make him appear small and trifling in her eyes.

"Okay," he said thickly, without enthusiasm.

ON Sunday morning Cadet Eddie Mangin and Peggy Hall were walking across the paved floor of the huge, marble and stone rotunda of Bancroft Hall, United States Naval Academy. They approached a small room on the left side of the rotunda, where a midshipman duty officer was busily writing at a desk. He rose courteously to receive them, his gold

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and silver hilted sword in its black scabbard jingling from his black leather belt.

"I think," Peggy said to Eddie, "that I'd better send for Howard Brundige first. He can show you around Bancroft Hall, if you like, while I—talk to Dick."

The duty officer suggested that they take chairs in the reception room next door, while he sent for Midshipman Brundige.

Peggy had sent for Brundige in her own name. When he eagerly entered the gloomy, barren reception room, his face fell upon seeing Mangin.

"Eddie would like to see the quarters, Howard," smiled the girl. "Will you take him up to your room while I send for Dick?"

Brundige was mystified. He also appeared nervous and apprehensive. It was as if he sensed something wrong, and was wondering what Peggy was doing with the West Pointer in Annapolis.

"Why—ah—sure, Peggy!" he finally stammered. "Come on, Eddie."

It seemed to Eddie that they had traversed miles of wide, spacious corridors before they finally halted before a door at the end of a hall.

"This is sure one big barracks!" remarked Eddie.

"It covers twenty acres," replied the midshipman. "Three miles of corridors like this. The whole Regiment of Midshipmen—twenty-five hundred strong—live here."

Brundige opened the door and stood aside for Eddie to enter the room. The cadet surveyed the study chamber with admiration and envy. His glance, happening to fall upon the top of a table, noted an open check book.

"Good night! Do they allow you to keep checking accounts, too?"

Brundige's smile faded instantly. He crossed the room and snatched up the check book. But not before Eddie's idle glance had time to read: "Pay to the order of John Benson—$5,000."

"No, they don't!" snapped Brundige. He was angry with himself for having left his check book on the table. He had been on the point of filling out the check when word had come that Peggy wanted to see him. In his pleasure and excitement he had rushed off, forgetting to put away the check book.

At that moment the door of the room flew open. Midshipman Dick Glenning burst in, wild-eyed. He hesitated a moment, glaring at Mangin.

"You damned girl stealer!" he cried.

He started to lunge at the cadet, but Brundige intercepted him.

"Cut it, Dick!" he warned. "One of the duty officers would be here in two shakes, and you'd be in a nasty mess for jumping a West Pointer in Bancroft Hall!"

Glenning controlled himself with difficulty.

"Listen, Mangin! I'll get you for this! You don't care for Peggy. You just went after her because it would please your vanity and your big head to have a Navy girl on your string. Well, you may be able to kid her along and break her heart, *but you're going to pay for it next Saturday in the Navy game!* I'll get you, if it's the only thing I do!"

CHAPTER VI.

A SUDDEN DECISION.

FOOTBALL excitement increased steadily at West Point as the week progressed. The stern gray stone buildings of West Point had assumed their annual Navy game aspect. Huge

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banners of white, with black letters, hung from the academic buildings and the barracks. "Sink the Navy!" "On, Army!" Even on the square gothic tower of the cadet chapel on the hill was a banner: "Get the Navy's goat!"

In the middle of the week, a bombshell exploded in the midst of the Corps of Cadets. Eddie Mangin was not going to play in the Navy game. He was through with football.

The news left the corps dazed, mystified, and angry. It felt that without Mangin, the Navy game was as good as lost. The tide of resentment rose high against him. That he felt it deeply was evident by his sober face and general air of unhappiness. But he remained adamant in his decision.

The team was leaving for New York on Friday afternoon, directly after classes. The corps would follow on Saturday, arriving in the city in time to detrain and march to the field before the game.

On Friday afternoon the last class was over at three o'clock. The old South Area of barracks was alive with a thousand gray-clad men gathering together to give the team a parting ovation. They collected beside a roadway next to the South Guardhouse, where a bus was waiting to take the football squad to the railroad station.

Meanwhile, Eddie Mangin was pacing nervously up and down the second floor hall of his division of barracks. His footfalls sounded desolate and cheerless on the red composition floor. The barracks were empty. Every man had gone to see the team off.

Bill McAllister, Eddie's roommate, had been the last to leave. Eddie winced at the memory of Bill's parting words. The sallow, saturnine Texan had been bitter.

"You and I are through, Mangin! I'm moving across the hall next week. Where I come from, men aren't quitters, and I just can't make up my mind to live with one. I kind of had you figured for a man. When people told me that you were girl crazy, and that you didn't have anything in your head but football for the sake of Eddie Mangin, and not for the team or the school, I thought they were just jealous of your success.

"But I was wrong. You've been here for three years, but you haven't learned anything.

"You don't understand what the West Point spirit means. You've played football because you liked to see your name in the headlines.

"Now that something else has come up that's evidently more important to your selfish nature, you're ready to chuck it. It's only your last game anyway, and one less game doesn't matter.

"You've had you're full share of glory. You're not thinking of the corps, the team, and West Point. *You never did.* It doesn't matter to you if the Navy beats the Army—as long as you are not in the game. Well, you can go to hell as far as I'm concerned!"

It had been a long speech for Bill—and it hurt. Eddie realized that Bill wouldn't have understood about Peggy. No one would, so he had kept his mouth shut.

Eddie ran a hand through his rumpled brown hair and paced more desperately up and down the narrow corridor, as the sounds of cheering came through the hall window. He knew that the seething mass of cadets beside the guardhouse were hailing individual members of the team as they issued from their respective barracks to cross the Area and board the bus. How

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many, many times they had cheered him, on similar afternoons!

EDDIE turned at the window and started down the hall again. He could not break his promise to Peggy. He had given it and he would keep it. That she was in love with him he could not doubt. She had proved her sincerity by immediately breaking her engagement with Dick Glenning.

He clenched his perspiring fists and stared unhappily through the window, which he had reached again. He tried to console himself by thinking that the Army would win the game anyway.

If—if—if he had only not given her his promise in that rash moment of Saturday night! She had been so near to him, so compelling, so completely desirable. West Point, the corps, the team had seemed far away then.

A groan burst from his lips; perspiration beaded his forehead. West Point was very near and real now. Through the past week he had suffered more than he had even dared to admit to himself. The silent, meaningful looks, the tightened lips of the men in gray. The very buildings themselves, formerly so familiar and friendly, had seemed to have assumed a cold, accusing quality. He was a traitor to West Point—for a woman.

He tried to picture how that woman would look, if he should appear on the field in to-morrow's game. She would be startled, shocked, and deeply hurt. Her world, which she had planned to share with him, would come crashing down about her. He had not been man enough to keep his promise to her. Eddie pushed his hand through his hair again.

At that moment he heard a thousand voices outside singing the Army's familiar battle song, "Slum and Gravy," whose music was the thrilling air of "Song of the Vagabonds." He raised his head to listen.

"Sons of slum and gravy,
Will you let the Navy
Take from us the victory?
Hear a warriors' chorus,
Sweep that line before us,
Carry on to victory.

"Onward, Onward, the Army's banners go!
Forward, Forward, charge against the foe!
Sons of Mars and Thunder,
Rip that line asunder,
Carry on to Victory-y-y-y!"

At the song's rousing conclusion, something suddenly happened to Eddie deep down inside his breast. He didn't see in his mind the roaring thousands when Eddie Mangin ran the length of a field for a touchdown; he saw a long gray line of silent men, stretching into the hazy distance of years, men who had fought the Navy, and won and lost, but who had always played the game.

A full-bodied chant was seeping through the window from the Area. It came from the throats of the present day corps, the corps of which Eddie Mangin was a part, the corps which was faithfully carrying on the West Point spirit of other corps long dead.

"Mangin! We want Mangin!"

Eddie knew what had happened. The football squad was in the bus and ready to go. But the Corps of Cadets, to the last minute, was refusing to believe that Eddie Mangin had really gone back on it.

Eddie did not hesitate any longer. He dashed down the barracks stairs and into the Area. As he ran he thought to himself that if Peggy really loved him, she would forgive him. She would finally understand, after all, that a West Pointer could not go back on the corps, no matter what happened—no

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matter if it meant the losing of Peggy herself!

The gray throng saw him approaching the guardhouse, and began to cheer madly. They parted to permit him to gain the running board of the bus.

"You're going to play Saturday, Eddie, aren't you?" shouted a voice in the crowd.

Eddie Mangin's old-time grin appeared, and he waved a fist in the air. "You bet I'm going to play! And we're going to lick the Navy!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE ENEMY'S CAMP.

THE Army football squad had been taken to an exclusive Westchester County country club, not far from New York City, to spend the last night before the big game. Thus it was assured of rest and seclusion.

The next morning Eddie had breakfast with the squad in the club's large and cheerful dining room, whose many windows looked out upon a smooth, rolling golf course, grayish under the unbroken, leaden sky of a late fall day. The squad was in an exuberant, confident mood, which almost succeeded in hiding the nervousness deep under the surface. The day of the big game had arrived at last. It was "Army weather," gray, dry, and cold. If it had been raining, or the ground had been covered with slushy snow, the weather would have been called "Navy," and consequently would have inserted a tiny, gloomy premonition into the day.

After breakfast the squad adjourned in a body to the main hall of the club, where mail awaited them at the desk. It had been brought down from West Point early that morning, in order that the players might not have even the slight, unsettling influence of not receiving their mail as usual.

There were about a dozen letters for Eddie Mangin, but none from Peggy. Disappointed, he was glumly going through them again when one bearing a gold seal of a Naval Academy class caught his eye.

He opened it and read:

DEAR EDDIE:

I don't want you to think that I am telling tales out of school, but I honestly believe that there is something you should know. As a square member of the Regiment of Midshipmen—which has always been fair and above-board in its relations with West Point—I feel that it is my duty to tell you this.

We have heard here at the Naval Academy that you are not going to play against us in Saturday's game. Nobody else knows why—but I do. Peggy Hall is deliberately making a fool out of you so the Navy will win. Her breaking her engagement with Dick Glenning was all a fake. I know, because I have known Peggy and Dick for a long time—*much longer than you.* Take it from me, Eddie, this is the straight dope. Some people want the Navy to win, even if they have to pull a dirty stunt to fix it. But I am sure that I am speaking not only for myself, but the entire Regiment of Midshipmen, when I say that if we cannot win fairly, we don't want to win at all. That is why I have written to you.

Most sincerely yours,
HOWARD BRUNDIGE.

Eddie sat motionless in one of the wicker chairs with which the hall was furnished, and stared dazedly at the letter in his hand. It was impossible, cried his whirling brain! Peggy Hall wouldn't do a thing like that!

He read the letter a second time. By the time he had finished his eyes were glittering with anger. It was a malicious lie! But—but, the doubt entered his mind, why had Brundige written this lying letter? If it were not true, he certainly was playing with

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dynamite to write it. If Eddie showed the letter to Peggy, demanding an explanation, she could cause a great deal of trouble for Midshipman Howard Brundige at the Naval Academy. But suppose that the information was true?

Eddie stared ahead of him unseeingly, his fists clenched on the arms of the chair. There was a feeling of desperation within him. He knew that he could not play football, could not do or think of anything, until he found out the truth. If he could only see Peggy herself. But that was impossible. He knew that she was going to attend the game, but he did not have the slightest idea where to find her until after the game.

A hand fell upon Eddie's shoulder, and he looked up into the smiling face of a teammate.

"We're going into the ballroom to see a movie, Eddie. The coach says it's a swell comedy to take our minds off the game until time for lunch."

Eddie was starting to rise from the chair when he was struck by a sudden thought. If he could find Brundige, he could force the truth out of him.

"Say!" he demanded. "Are the middies staying in town overnight after the game?"

"Sure," came the disgusted reply. "Those midshipmen get all the breaks! The corps has free time until midnight, and then it's got to go back to the Point. But the middies are staying over until Sunday. I saw in the morning paper where they were arriving at the Hotel Admiral about ten o'clock. Hey!" he broke off suddenly, as Eddie turned on his heel and started rapidly down the hall. "Where're you going?"

Eddie's pace increased to a run.

"I've got to see somebody," he flung over his shoulder, "at the Hotel Admiral!"

"But—but the game, Eddie! The coach'll raise hell if you go off like this!"

"Tell the coach I'll be there in time to play. See that my football stuff is brought out to the stadium, will you?"

HOTEL ADMIRAL, New York City, was the Navy headquarters, just as the Hotel Astoria, on Broadway, was the headquarters for the Army.

Eddie threaded his way across the lobby crowded by midshipmen and naval officers in dark blue uniforms, and smiling, chattering girls carrying blue, Navy banners and wearing rosettes of blue and gold on their fur coat collars. At the desk he found out what room had been assigned to Midshipman Howard Brundige. A moment later he stood before the door of that room. He was on the point of knocking when he heard Brundige's voice issue distinctly through the grilled ventilators of the painted steel door.

"It's a cinch from now on, Benson. I wrote a letter to that girl-crazy, swell-headed Mangin, and told him that she was trying to put over a frame-up. He'll play to-day after that, all right. Navy hasn't a prayer to win with him in the Army line-up, and she'll lose her two thousand dollars that she gave me to place for her among people I know on Wall Street. She gave me the money to bet because I had the connections who could place a sum of money that large. I didn't bet it, of course.

"It's a good thing she did," Brundige's voice went on, "or else I might never have tumbled to her little scheme, although I did think it was queer that she should break off with Dick Glenning so suddenly for the sake of this Army dumbbell, whom she only saw once before in her life. With Mangin not playing, she would have collected

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her bet, and had enough to cover her brother's shortage."

"I'm not so sure," rumbled a heavy voice, which Mangin, listening intently outside the door, did not recognize, "that Navy'll lose, even if Mangin's playing. The betting went to even money this morning, you know."

"Aw," sneered Brundige, "that's a lot of talk, Benson! She's going to lose her money, and she'll be desperate. There's only one person she can come to—and that's me! Glenning doesn't know it, but he's lost his girl for good—and not to the guy he thinks he's lost her to, either."

"Well, it doesn't matter to me," said the heavy voice, "as long as I get my dough out of it. How about writing out that check now, and I'll beat it? I'm nervous as hell around this hotel. It's full of naval officers, and I might be recognized, even if I am in civilian clothes, and have my overcoat pulled up to my ears. You know the Brooklyn Navy Yard doesn't know that I've skipped with the five grand yet, but it does know that I'm A. W. O. L. And I don't hanker to be picked up."

Brundige's reply sounded irritated.

"I don't see why I should give you any more money! I gave you what we agreed on. You stole the five thousand, and I gave you five thousand more. That's enough, I think."

"Oh, is it? You talked me into taking that five grand, mister, and you're going to see me through! It takes—"

At that moment, Eddie knocked on the door.

The heavy voice ceased speaking abruptly, and the room was silent. Finally the door opened part way, and Brundige's face appeared. When the midshipman saw the cadet, his face paled and his greenish eyes distended.

Eddie did not wait for the door to be shut in his face, or for an invitation to enter. He shouldered his way into the room.

"What—what do you want?" stammered Brundige.

Eddie's gray eyes narrowed slightly, and his gloved right fist swung upward suddenly and viciously. Brundige caught the blow on the point of his little chin and staggered back across the room to collapse at the side of the bed.

A short, stocky man, who had been sitting in a chair beside the window, rose to his feet belligerently.

"What the hell!" he growled in his thick throat.

He hurled himself across the room at the cadet.

CHAPTER VIII.

NAVY TACTICS.

THE steel, double-tiered stands of Yankee Stadium were packed to capacity. Emergency stands had been erected in the corners of the field, and these too were jammed to the last inch. There were close to eighty thousand people present, and this gigantic mass of humanity was seething with excitement. The Army and the Navy each had approximately one half the stands, on opposite sides of the field. Civilians made up most of the crowd, but the Army side of the field was studded with officers in olive drab, while on the Navy side were officers in dark blue. The ladies, depending upon the inclinations of their hearts, carried black, gold, and gray banners for Army, or blue and gold for Navy.

The Military Academy band, dressed in uniforms of blue, with white-caped overcoats, appeared on the field, emerging from a passageway cut through the stadium. It was followed by rank after

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rank of tall, erect, gray clad men, whose easy, swinging, precise stride caused the crowd to wonder and admire.

Around the edge of the field they marched, every rank in alignment as straight as the white lines they were passing. The band was playing the inspiring words of an Army football song:

"On, Army, we are backing you.
Our hearts are ever stanch and true.
We've got the kind of fight that makes the Navy blue,
The kind that makes our old mule bray.

"On, Army, can't you hear our call,
Urging you on to get the ball?
So open up and hit them with the arsenal,
And win the game for us to-day."

As each cadet company arrived in front of the section of empty seats on the Army side of the field, it disintegrated and its members left the field to go into the stands. What had been a vacant section of the stands became a living square of gray.

The crowd had hardly time to settle in its seats when the music of another band brought it to its feet again. The Navy was entering the field, headed by its band in dark blue. Twenty-five hundred stalwart young men in Navy blue, their heads erect on their squared shoulders, their eyes to the front, marched with matching step in well dressed lines around the same path taken a moment previously by the gray host of West Point. The song they marched to set the hearts of the crowd to beating high and fast. It was the famous "Anchors Aweigh," of the Navy.

"Stand, Navy, down the field,
Sail set to the sky.
We'll never change our course,
So Army you steer shy-y-y-y.
Roll up the score, Navy,
Anchors aweigh.
Sail, Navy, down the field,
And sink the Army,
Sink the Army Gray."

Two such spectacles, the gray and the blue, made up of the future leaders in America's defense, on land and on sea, straight, young, and healthy, set the enthusiasm of the crowd on fire. The stadium was a bowl of tremendous sound as the ranks of midshipmen melted into the stands to become a living cheering mass of blue directly across the field from the smaller mass of gray.

The stage was set for the Army-Navy game.

At two o'clock the referee, all in white, called the field captains of the two teams to the fifty yard line for the toss of the coin. The Navy captain won, and elected to receive the kick-off. As the gray, cold day offered no sun and very little wind, the Army captain was indifferent to the choice of which goal he wished to defend first. He finally selected the one which would place the Army sections of the stands on his right.

The stadium grew tense as the two teams lined up for the initial kick-off. The Navy captain raised his hand; his men were ready. The captain of the Army thrust his hand into the air. The referee's whistle blew shrilly—and the game was on.

The ball shot into the air in a long, high arc, sailing straight down the middle of the field, to be finally gathered in by the Navy full-back standing on his twenty-five yard line. He was able to take but a half dozen steps when he was brought to earth solidly by two Army men.

The two teams, fresh and eager for the battle, jumped into position along

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the line of scrimmage. The ball was approximately on the Navy's thirty yard line. The Navy quarter began bawling signals lustily.

Meanwhile, in the stands, people were wondering why Eddie Mangin was not in the game. Down in the sections of gray, cadets were worrying. Perhaps Eddie had undergone another change of mind, and had refused to play. In the center of the benches, where the long row of black-hooded Army substitutes sat, a large man in olive drab uniform was nervously gnawing at his fingernails and staring across the gridiron to where the teams were waiting tensely for the ball to be passed. He was the Army's head coach. He silently cursed the absent Mangin, and hoped that right halfback's inexplicable desertion at the last minute would not have a disastrous effect upon the morale of the team.

Across the field, in the Navy stands, a pretty blond girl in a gray squirrel coat had her small gloved hands tightly clasped together, while hope flamed high in her heart. Eddie Mangin had kept his promise. Her brain was crying out: Come on, now, Navy! *Win!*

She saw the ball snapped back, and the two lines surge together. Her eyes instinctively picked out one man among the struggling, running players. He was Dick Glenning—and he had the ball!

He ploughed his way viciously through the Army line, between guard and tackle, for a full fifteen yards. He had dragged two Army men, clinging to him desperately, at least half of the distance.

First down—ball on Navy's forty-five yard line. Signals again, crisp and distinct. Again the lines smashed against each other, and again a single, dark blue jersey knifed through the Army defense, almost getting away completely. Dick Glenning jumped up from the ball, his rugged features set in hard, grim lines. He had made thirty-three yards in two downs.

Taking up his position at left halfback, his blue eyes roved through the Army defense mercilessly and determinedly. He was going for a touchdown. There was a feeling inside him that told him nothing could stop him. He could batter his way through steel and stone, if necessary, instead of mere walls of flesh and bone. He clenched his fists. Where was Mangin? He was the man Glenning ached to batter.

In the stands all around the field the great crowd was going wild. The Navy had the vaunted Army team on the run. It even looked shattered and uncertain. The coach, on the substitutes' bench, was clenching his fists. Across the field, the dark eyes of Peggy Hall were shining.

OUTSIDE the many-portaled, stone walls of the big stadium, two police motor cycles, their sirens whistling loudly and continuously, streaked up the street beneath the elevated tracks. They were followed by an official police car, which screeched to a stop before the stadium, its rubber tires smoking on the pavement. Out of its rear tonneau stepped a man in a bedraggled, gray uniform. He grinned at the two policemen in the front seat and received broad grins in return.

Then Eddie Mangin hastened through a turnstile and hurried toward a portal that led underneath the stadium to the dressing rooms of the teams. Hearing a tremendous roar from the crowd, he quickened his pace and vanished.

Eddie found the Army dressing rooms to be in the sole possession of

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a number of rubbers, all of them old, retired soldiers. They were sitting together among the rubbing tables and the rows of clothes lockers when Eddie dashed into the room.

Their eyes widened upon him. The cape of his overcoat was ripped all the way around and was hanging dejectedly from his left shoulder by almost a single thread. A generous portion of skin beneath his right eye had turned yellow and black. Both lips were puffy, and the lower one was split. The rubbers gaped.

"What's the score?" demanded Eddie, tearing off his overcoat and flinging it from him, to fall where it would.

Old Marty, the dean of the rubbers, rose slowly to his feet. He was a little blue-eyed, wrinkled Irishman.

"Sivin to nothin'," he answered. "That divil Glennin', o' the Navy, made the touchdown. An' they kicked the gool, too!"

"What period?" Eddie shot back at him, his gray blouse and trousers falling into a pile on the floor. "Get me my football clothes!" he shouted.

"Sicond," answered Marty. "An' from the yellin' o' the crowd across the field, it looks like the Navy is goin' for another touchdown, sure!"

"Uh-huh," came Eddie's voice, muffled by his jersey, which he was pulling over his head.

"Where ye been, Eddie?" asked Marty curiously. "The coach is madder'n a Orangeman on Saint Patrick's Day!"

Eddie's puffed lips parted in an unmistakable grin.

"Jail. Me and two other guys got arrested for fighting in the Hotel Admiral," he continued ungrammatically.

Marty's eyes looked past Eddie's shoulder at the door.

"Here's a naval officer who's been lookin' for ye iver since we got here," he muttered.

Eddie turned to face Lieutenant Hall, Peggy's brother. The naval officer looked slender and young in his neat, dark blue uniform. But his eyes were shadowed by dark circles, and his mouth looked as if it had never known a smile.

"You remember me?" he said, holding out his hand. "I'm Peggy's brother."

"Sure I remember you!" replied Eddie cheerfully. "And I've got something to tell you, too!"

Bob Hall shook his head. Pain, like a cloud, settled across his face.

"I've got something to tell you first. It's—it's—about my sister."

"Yeah, I know," remarked Eddie dryly.

"You know!" cried the officer, astonished. "Did she—did she tell you?"

Eddie shook his head. He was busily engaged in lacing his cleated football shoes.

"I'm sorry she didn't," continued Hall earnestly. "But if you knew everything, Mangin, you'd understand. Peggy is intensely loyal. She'd do *anything* for me. But I had to come to you—before the game. You see, I knew what Peggy was trying to do. I—I guess I agreed with her, at first. Anything was better than what I had to face. But I got to thinking about the Naval Academy. You know, we Navy men are proud of our honor and traditions, and all that, just like you Pointers are. And—and—well, I couldn't see this thing go through."

He looked desperately at Eddie.

"You — you understand what I mean?"

Eddie stood up, and his gray eyes gazed steadily into the officer's pain-

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filled, dark brown ones. The cadet's hand fell upon Hall's left shoulder, and tightened. The man of West Point and the man of Annapolis understood each other. There was a slight moisture in Lieutenant Hall's eyes, and Eddie himself felt an odd constriction in his throat.

"It's funny," he laughed uncertainly, "what Annapolis and West Point do to men!"

Then he grinned.

"There're two birds in jail downtown whom I think you'd like to see. One is a midshipman by the name of Brundige, and the other is an A. W. O. L. Navy C. P. O. called Benson."

"*Benson!*"

"Yep. Brundige got Benson to steal the money from the fund for which you were responsible. I overheard them talking about it at the Hotel Admiral this afternoon. Then we all got pinched for trying to knock the hotel apart. But New York cops are swell—they're all great Notre Dame fans. When the desk sergeant found out who I was—he'd seen the Army-Notre Dame game—he believed every word I said. Brundige and Benson didn't have a chance. The sergeant sent me up here in a police car so I could play. He's going to keep Brundige and Benson in the jug until I get back. But why don't you go down there now, and—"

The naval officer was too excited to contain himself.

"So that was what Brundige was doing those times he visited me at the Yard!" he exploded. "Bribing Benson to embezzle that money and run away! Putting me on the spot so he could make Peggy marry him!"

Suddenly he seized Eddie's hand and shook it frantically. Then he turned and rushed for the door.

"Hey!" Eddie called after the retreating blue figure. "Brundige still has your sister's two thousand bucks. She darn' near lost it for fooling with my affections!"

CHAPTER IX.

CUT DOWN FROM BEHIND.

THE stadium was in an uproar. The second period was nearly over, but the Navy was a short five yards from its second touchdown. Enthusiasm on the Navy side of the stadium was approaching the delirium point. The blue square of the Regiment of Midshipmen was demanding that the ball be taken across the final line.

Down in the sections of gray the cadets were bitterly blaming Eddie Mangin for his inexplicable desertion. On the substitutes' bench, the Major, the Army coach, knew that his team was demoralized. It had become so used to Eddie backing up the defense, leading the attack, pulling it out of tight holes, that it was bewildered and lost without him. At the moment, the future looked black. A two touchdown lead in an Army-Navy game was practically a guarantee of victory.

Quarter-back Frank Price, captain of the Army, signaled to the referee for time out. With an almost superhuman task facing his team, that of stopping the Navy four times in less than five yards, he wanted to give his men a rest and time to nerve themselves for the ordeal.

When the two minute time out period was nearly over, both teams became aware of a sudden increase of noise in the stadium, and saw the crowd rising to its feet in slow, successive waves to see the lone Army player running across the field.

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Hands on his hips, the white-clad umpire watched the substitute approach. He found himself looking at puffed lips parted in a grin, and a pair of gray eyes, one of which was in mourning, but nevertheless was gleaming as humorously as its twin.

"Eddie Mangin, sir!" reported the incoming player cheerfully. "For Williams, right half-back."

The entire Army side of the stadium saw the substitution, and as the two teams lined up after the time out, the cheering increased in volume and contained a new note of hope. The smile faded from the lovely face of the girl in gray in the Navy stands, and her large dark eyes became troubled and worried. In the Navy backfield, Dick Glenning narrowed his eyes grimly and tightened his square jaw as he waited for the ball to come to him.

The lines charged at each other, and Dick Glenning smashed into the struggling mass.

Upon completion of the play, the referee lifted the ball, squinted toward the head linesman, and snapped:

"Second down—four yards to go!"

The Navy full-back, a mountain of a man, was given the ball on the next play. The opposing lines became one, and surged toward the goal line.

"Third down," announced the referee. "One yard to go!"

Pandemonium reigned throughout the stadium. Army rooters were yelling desperately for the Army line to emulate a stone wall; Navy supporters were swaying in rhythm toward the goal line, begging their team to "take it over!"

Both teams crouched along the line of scrimmage grimly. One yard to go! The Army had not shown as much fight as this since the game began. Eddie was behind the line, smiling as usual, and shooting a cheerful word at the perspiration drenched backs of the linemen in front of him. The Navy quarter was calling signals deliberately. His backfield was tense behind him.

Suddenly the ball was snapped, and the big Navy full-back hit the left side of the Army line with the terrific force of a pile driver. Although the football rules forbade piling, there was such a mound at the point of contact that the referee was almost a minute digging the ball out from beneath it. Here was a case of a concentrated attack at close quarters, and the piling up was not only unintentional but vitally necessary.

"Fourth down—*goal to go!*"

The stadium was in the throes of hysterical excitement. The last down, and less than a yard to go! It did not seem possible that flesh and bone could now prevent the ball from crossing the fatal line.

Dick Glenning was the logical man to carry the pigskin. He waited for it grimly. Then he had it in his hands. The signals had called for a cross-buck off Army's right tackle. Glenning headed for that point, but saw that the Army line had flung his interference back ruthlessly. There was no hole.

With eighty thousand people shrieking insanely, he exerted himself to the last ounce of speed, and flung himself at an opening which had suddenly appeared beyond the right end. Head down, he struck something solid. He dug in his cleats and strove with all his strength to push it over. But the solid body refused to yield an inch. The referee blew his whistle. The ball had been stopped short of the scoring line.

Dick Glenning raised his head to see what had halted him, and gazed into the snapping eyes of Eddie Mangin.

"Damn you!" cursed the Navy half-back, bitterly disappointed because he

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had failed to make the touchdown, and the man who had prevented him was the man whom he hated, the man who had stolen his fiancée. "I'll get you!" Glenning raved. "We're going to beat hell out of the Army, and I'm going to beat hell out of you!"

Eddie Mangin's smile faded, and his eyes grew sober. He was on the point of making a reply, when the referee stepped between them and took the ball from Glenning's hands. Glenning turned abruptly and went back to his teammates. Eddie watched him go, and then finally shrugged his shoulders.

The touchdown had been narrowly averted, and it was Army's ball on its own one yard line. The stadium held its breath while the Army full-back, kicking from behind his goal line, punted the ball forty-five yards down the field to safety.

The time remaining until the end of the half was growing short. The Navy, anxious to get down in scoring position again, managed to make two first downs, but was finally obliged to kick. The ball went into the end zone, and was brought out to the twenty yard line, where the Army put it in play. Eddie took the ball for the first down, and made approximately six yards through a viciously fighting Navy eleven. Then the field judge's gun exploded, ending the first half.

The half was over, and telegraph keys in the press box were clicking furiously, sending out the unexpected news to the world that a fighting Navy eleven was leading the great Army team at half time by the score of 7 to 0.

REFRESHED by the fifteen minute intermission, both elevens appeared on the gridiron ready to continue the gruelling contest. It was apparent by their grim, purposeful demeanor that each realized that the game was already half over, and what was done in the next thirty minutes could never be revoked or changed. When they came off the field again the game would be history, and the wings of victory would be irretrievably spread over the blue and gold banner of the Navy, or the black, gray and gold standard of West Point.

The crowded stadium was aware of the feeling too, and hearts beat faster with excitement. The Corps of Cadets and the Regiment of Midshipmen prepared to do their utmost in the way of cheering for their teams.

It was Navy's kick-off to the Army. In his position deep in West Point territory, Eddie Mangin shifted nervously from one foot to the other, like a restive race horse eager to shoot under the wire. He was staring up the field, his eyes fixed upon the Navy back who was to kick the ball.

Eddie was conscious of a peculiar, thrilling feeling in his breast. He was playing his last game of football. Upon the expiration of thirty playing minutes, Eddie Mangin would be just a name in the record books, and on a bronze plaque of "A" men in the stone hall of the West Point gymnasium, as far as football was concerned. No more thousands inspired by his breath-taking runs, no more the feel of the hard leather ball in his hands, no more the physical shock of meeting a tackler and crashing to the turf, no more the satisfaction of touching the ball down behind the opponents' goal posts and turning around to grin in their disgruntled faces.

Eddie sighed once faintly, and brought his thoughts down to the game at hand. The Navy was ahead, 7 to 0. Dick Glenning was out to get him. Eddie's eyes narrowed slightly.

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At the same instant, the referee's whistle shrilled sharply through the comparative stillness of the stadium. The Navy line swept forward, and the kicker's toe lifted the ball into the air.

Eddie's heart jumped once, and then resumed its beating at a faster rate. The ball was dropping into his territory. Taking it surely in his arms, Eddie started up the field, several players gathering in front of him to act as interference. He followed behind them faithfully until they were depleted to a single man by Navy tacklers endeavoring to get to the ball carrier. Then he decided to shift for himself.

By that time the crowd was aware of who was carrying the ball, yelling and on its feet, it watched him zigzag, dodge, and side-step among the Navy players darting at him from all sides.

He was almost up to the fifty yard line. Now there were fewer Navy players in front of him. Most of them had been left behind, with the Army team, and were racing madly to catch up with him.

Eighty thousand people were electrified. Eddie Mangin was loose again! It had happened suddenly, unexpectedly, and startlingly. He had received the ball in the first minute of play, and it certainly looked as if he were weaving his way through the broken field for a touchdown. Navy tacklers had desperately tried to head him off, and bring him to earth, but he had avoided them all with his deceptive change of pace and the shifty swinging of his hips.

Eddie's arms, one clasping the ball firmly, were pumping back and forth; his heels were flying high behind him. He had passed the fifty yard line, and left another tackler sprawled on the gridiron behind him. He was up to the forty—the thirty—and the safety man was in front of him. He wasn't worried. Eluding safety men had become a specialty with him.

The crowd gasped when he escaped the tackler's outstretched arms by a hair's breath. Now his way to the goal line was clear. Twenty-five yards away was a touchdown.

A louder roar rolled out from both sides of the stadium. A single, blue-jerseyed figure was well in advance of the straggling players in Eddie's rear. This man was racing after Mangin with almost superhuman strides. At every instant he cut down the distance between him and the Army half-back.

The Corps of Cadets shrieked to warn Eddie of his danger. The Regiment of Midshipmen was silent, praying desperately for the pursuer to overtake the Army's stellar touchdown maker.

Eddie was confident of the touchdown, although he did not slacken his pace. He had just passed the twenty yard line when suddenly he was knocked down by a terrific impact. The Regiment of Midshipmen went wild.

Eddie got to his feet sheepishly, the goal line fifteen yards away. Every bone in his body had been shaken by one of the hardest tackles he had ever received. He stared at the enigmatical back of Dick Glenning, who was walking off, dusting his hands.

CHAPTER X.

THE BIG DRIVE.

EDDIE knew only too well that he was in a hard game, and playing against a tough man who bore him no love.

From that moment Eddie grew more grim and purposeful. The ball was on Navy's fifteen yard line, and he asked to be given the first try. He made a

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niggardly two yards, being stopped short with a jolt that made the bottom of his spine tingle. Glancing down, he found himself locked against the broad, powerful shoulder of Dick Glenning.

Ire mounted swiftly in Eddie's breast. He demanded that he be given the ball on all succeeding plays, and received it, despite Quarter-back Rice's open disapproval.

It was sledge hammer work, but Eddie finally made first down by the width of his eyebrows. He felt encouraged, and glanced triumphantly over the two crouching lines at Glenning in the Navy backfield. But Glenning's face was as hard and impersonal as a stone mountain.

On the next play Eddie went wide around the Army left end, cut in suddenly, and leaped across five yards for the touchdown.

While the big drum of the Army band boomed repeatedly, and the Army sections of the stands were going mad, Eddie looked around for Glenning, and discovered him among the sober-faced Navy team. Glenning's face was as inscrutable as before, but his steely blue eyes were glittering.

The Army full-back attempted the kick for the point after touchdown, and failed. The Navy side of the field settled back in their seats with intense relief; the Army, disappointedly. The score was 7 to 6—still in Navy's favor.

But it seemed that once the Army tasted blood, it was out for a Roman holiday. Navy elected to receive the kick-off, but after three downs, which netted only three discouraging yards, was obliged to kick. An Army player took a bad punt on the Army's forty-five yard line, and carried the ball up to the Navy's forty yard stripe. From there on it became a steady march through a desperately fighting Navy line, with Half-back Mangin doing most of the work.

The Navy defense stiffened suddenly on its fifteen yard line. Eddie Mangin, in two downs, had gained the pitiful total of three yards, and that had cost him plenty of bruises.

"Time out!" called Frank Rice, to give his team a rest.

The time out period was a signal for a number of substitutes to appear on the field, most of them replacements for exhausted Navy linemen. But one of them was for the Army. He was the Army's emergency kicker.

"In place of Mangin," he told the umpire.

Eddie rose to his feet in astonishment.

"For me?" he cried.

But the umpire checked his incipient argument, and waved him off.

Eddie received tremendous applause as he left the field, but that did not assuage his intense disappointment. He headed straight for the coach.

"Listen, coach!" he cried. "What's the idea? I was on my way for a touchdown!"

"Sit down and take it easy, Eddie," soothed the officer. "You need a rest. You've been knocked around pretty hard this period."

"But the period is almost over!" replied Eddie indignantly. "It's the third period, and it's my last game, coach! I could have made that touchdown."

"Maybe," said the major noncommittally. "It looked to me like they had you pretty well stopped. I want to win this game, and a field goal might be just the very thing to turn the trick. You cut out stewing and get some rest. You might have to make a touchdown yet. I'll put you back in the fourth quarter, if you're needed."

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The emergency kicker waited calmly for the ball. The Regiment of Midshipmen implored their desperate team to break through and block the kick. The outcome of the game might be depending upon the toe of this kicker, whose only task was to make one drop-kick, and then go back to the substitutes' bench.

The lines fused. Calmly he received the pigskin, hesitated a moment to make certain of his direction, and then, unhurriedly, he kicked, as the first Navy player to break through the Army line charged him.

The ball barely cleared the cross-bar, but passed between the uprights.

Receiving an enthusiastic ovation from the Army side of the field, the kicker ran off the gridiron. The score was Army 9, Navy 7.

Shortly afterward, the third period ended.

THE fourth period was more than half over, and Eddie Mangin was still sitting among the substitutes. He was exceedingly disgruntled, and every now and then he would peer hopefully around the edge of the black monk's hood of his woolen suit at the coach.

Eddie knew that time was flying. He wanted to be back in the game again. It was his last game, and he had promised himself that he would do great things.

Several times he had called down to the coach, and once he was answered.

"I'm saving you," the major had said, "in case we need you, Eddie. It looked to me as if there were one or two Navy men interested in putting you to sleep. I don't want to take a chance on that happening, as long as you aren't really needed. Take it easy! The team is going along all right, isn't it?"

Eddie surveyed the play with jaundiced, envious gaze, visioning himself out on the field, making long runs culminating in touchdowns.

The action thus far in the fourth period was indecisive. Neither team seemed able to shake a back free for a long run, or maintain a drive for more than two first downs. The spectators judged that the elevens not only were tired, but also they were fighting too desperately to allow each other any consistent gains.

The field judge's stopwatch said five more minutes of play, when Navy suddenly electrified the crowd by beginning an intense, diversified attack by air. Both teams had used the forward pass sparingly heretofore, fearing that an interception would prove too costly. But now the Navy, evidently giving up hope of making fruitful headway through the tenacious Army line, and desperate to win the game, which was in its last minutes, was chancing everything on forward passes.

The first was tremendously successful, traveling twenty yards, from the Navy's thirty-five yard line to the Army's forty-five. But the second attempt was grounded, as was the third. In consequence, Navy was penalized five yards, bringing the ball back to the fifty yard line.

The vast stadium was in an uproar. The faces of the Corps of Cadets and the Army supporters began to grow worried. At any minute the Navy might uncork a pass to a neglected receiver, who would tear down the field for a touchdown. That would place Navy in the lead once more, and probably finally and definitely, since there were only about four minutes left to play.

The Army eleven seemed a little bewildered. They strove to be everywhere at once, and watch every Navy man

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eligible to receive a pass, but they missed a solitary end standing on the fifteen yard line, who received Dick Glenning's magnificent pass of forty yards. Without an Army player within ten yards of him, the end whirled and dashed down the sideline for the touchdown.

"Mangin!" shouted the Army coach, above the triumphant bedlam of noise coming from the Navy stands across the field.

At the sound of his name, Eddie shed blankets and peeled off his black woolen suit.

"Get out there at right half-back!" snapped the coach. "No instructions —*but make a touchdown!*"

Eddie was in his old position when the Navy kicker booted the ball across the bar for the extra point. The white numbers on the black scoreboard in a corner of the stadium showed that Navy had fourteen points, the Army, nine, and that there were three minutes to play.

Naturally the Army elected to receive the kick-off. The ball descended to the left half-back, who managed to make a dozen yards before being thrown out of bounds on the Army twenty-nine yard line.

After the referee brought the ball out from the sideline, practically every person of the eighty thousand in the stadium expected the Army to follow Navy's example, now that it was the team behind, and hurl a succession of forward passes.

But Quarter-back Frank Rice decided on wiser and more subtle strategy. Eddie Mangin, the best ground gainer on the field, was back in the game. Line against line, the Army had shown itself Navy's superior. Expecting passes, the Navy would loosen its defense against line plunges and end runs. The ultimate success of the quarter-back's plan depended upon two things: first, whether or not the Army team, in a crucial test, could batter its way down the field in a sustained drive; second, if there was enough time remaining for that drive.

It was the only thing to do, reasoned Rice. If he trusted to forward passes, and one was intercepted, the game would be lost.

THE brunt of the drive fell upon Eddie.

To the accompaniment of sustained noise from the intensely excited crowd which well knew that the end of the game was near, the Army team slowly and surely forced its way down the field, the Navy team desperately disputing every yard of the retreat.

At the Navy's forty-five yard line it seemed that the Army's grim march had been finally halted. Three downs had produced but six yards. The Army was faced with the choice of kicking, forward passing, or hitting the line, the last way seeming the most likely to fail. The quarter-back gave the ball to Eddie Mangin. By sheer strength and his amazing ability to keep on his feet, Eddie succeeded in making it a first down by inches.

The uproar increased in the stadium as the Army machine, functioning as it had never done before, pushed the unwilling Navy line back to the forty yard line, the thirty-five, the thirty, the twenty-five—

There was a minute left to play. By a swift, bewildering succession of plunges straight through the line, battering cross-bucks, and close end runs, the Army had marched the ball down from its own twenty-nine yard line to the Navy's eight yard line.

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Navy's back was to the wall in the last minute. If it could hold now, or at least until the field judge fired his pistol, it would defeat the Army eleven that had swept through its season unconquered. Midshipmen in the dark blue section of the stands prayed that time would pass quickly. Peggy Hall sat nervously forward in her seat, her face a chalky white, her gloved hands twisting and untwisting.

First down—eight yards to go.

Eddie Mangin, crouching close behind the linemen, heard his signal, as he had heard it so often on the drive down the field. He was to take the ball on a wide end run.

The quarter-back received the pass from the snapper-back, whirled, and slammed it into Eddie's stomach as the half-back passed him. Eddie continued on around the line, the Navy's right end having been boxed out by the Army's tackle and left half-back.

Eddie's heart leaped. He was going to get away. Suddenly he had a fleeting feeling that he had collided head on against a stone wall. Then he seemed to be falling with sickening speed into a black, bottomless pit.

He regained consciousness to find the team gathered around him, and Frank Rice bending concernedly over him. The quarter-back helped him to his feet, and Eddie immediately became aware of a stab of pain in his chest, which brought back the dizzying blackness for an instant.

"Want to go out, Eddie?" asked Rice anxiously.

Eddie raised his heavy, swimming head with difficulty. His clouded vision barely managed to make out the malevolent face of Dick Glenning in the Navy group a few feet away.

"Not on your life!" gasped Eddie huskily.

It was only by a tremendous effort of will that Eddie could keep from swaying on his feet. His mind tried to follow the signals, but they came confusedly through the crescendo of sound pouring from eighty thousand throats.

It was the second down, with about six yards to go for touchdown.

Rice, the quarter-back, glanced quickly at his right half-back, and decided to give the ball to the left half-back. Eddie looked to be out on his feet.

Rice received the pass from center, and was about to thrust it at the left half-back, when he felt the ball being torn from his grasp. His heart almost stopped from horror, as he thought that a Navy man must have somehow broken through the line in miraculously quick time to snatch the ball out of his hands. He looked up to see Eddie Mangin, the ball clasped in his arms, pass him heading in the direction of the Navy goal.

Eddie realized dimly that there were a bunch of men in front of him trying to stop him. He lowered his head further, and dug his cleats into the ground. He bumped one hazy figure out of the way, and caromed dizzily off of another. He moved without obstruction for a second, and then he became aware of a grip of iron tightening around his legs. He dragged along a step further, stumbled, and dropped headlong into the black pit again.

This time, when he returned to the conscious world, he was lying alongside a figure in a Navy blue jersey. He turned his head and saw that the unconscious man was Dick Glenning. He turned his head in the other direction, and saw that the middle of his back was across a white line. He looked up into the smiling faces of his teammates,

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and then he knew he had made a touchdown. His puffed lips parted in a grin.

It didn't matter that the Army followed its old habit of failing to make the point after touchdown. The score was Army 15, Navy 14—and Eddie Mangin's last game was over.

THE Army victory celebration at the Hotel Astoria that night was wild and enthusiastic. The lobby, the halls, and the great ballroom were crowded with Army officers, cadets in gray, and bright-eyed, laughing girls.

Eddie Mangin, at the team's table in the ballroom, was notified that he was wanted in the lobby.

He found Peggy Hall waiting for him. Beside her was her brother and Dick Glenning.

"Eddie"—she extended her hand impulsively—"I don't know how I can ever thank you! My brother told me about Brundige, at the hotel."

Eddie Mangin grinned.

"Forget it!" he advised succinctly.

"But how can you forgive me for—for—?"

Eddie's grin broadened. He thrust his arms through Peggy's and Dick's.

"By coming into the ballroom and meeting the most beautiful redhead in the world. Honestly, she's a peach! I just met her to-night, and I'm in love with her already!"

THE END.

First California Militia

THE first body of troops brought into Upper California for the defense of the colonists arrived in 1769 under the command of Don Gaspar de Portola.

These men were recruited from the hard bitten scoundrels of Mexico and Spain. They were known as the "Soldados de Cuero" or "The Leather Jacket Soldiers."

Their principal means of defense, one which gave rise to their nickname, was a long sleeveless jerkin with a wide collar, made of seven thicknesses of deerskin stitched together. This primitive armor resisted Indian arrows.

Upon the left arm was carried an oval leather shield made of two thick pieces of bullhide laced together with thongs. Upon the outer surface of this shield was painted the royal arms of Spain in red and gold, encircled with a green and red wreath. The whole was then highly varnished.

They carried long lances with shafts of filbert wood, and sharp steel heads two feet long and two inches wide. A short flintlock carbine in a foxskin case and a curved sword completed the armament. Their legs were protected by two heavy pieces of dressed cowskin hanging from the pommel of the saddle, known as *armas*. They were the forerunners of the cowboy's chaps. Low-crowned, broad-brimmed, black felt hats fastened under the chin with a strap completed the costume. Such was the uniform of the first militia in California.

Arthur Woodward.

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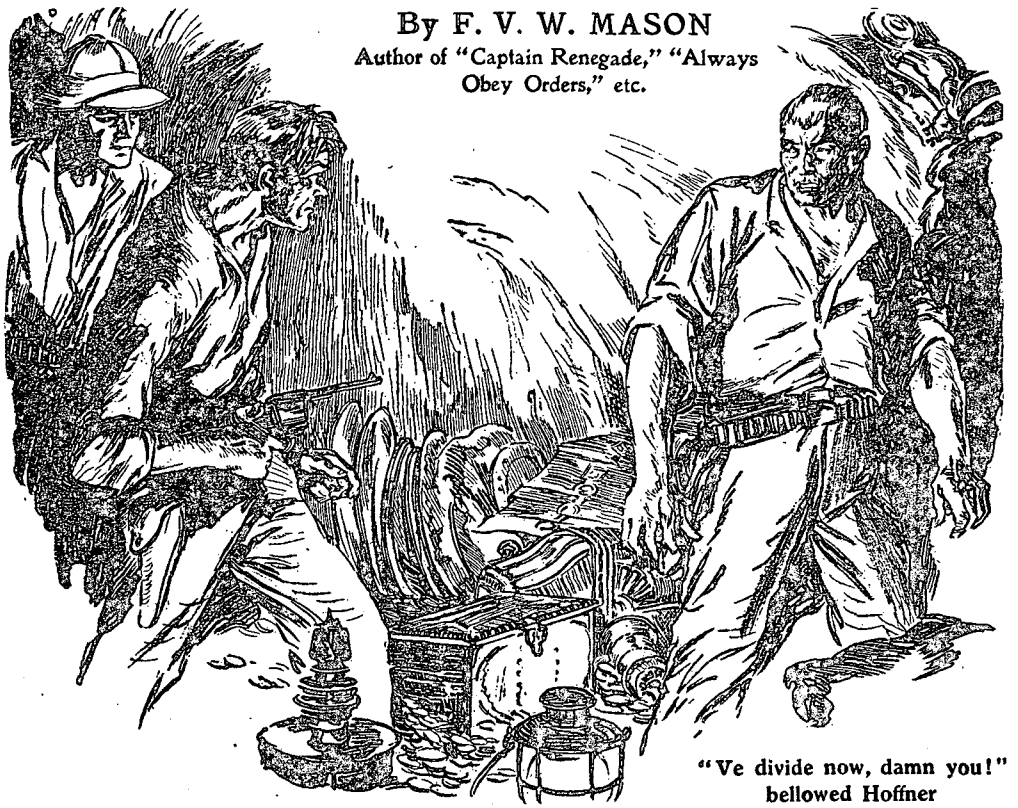
The Jungle Trap

By F. V. W. MASON
Author of "Captain Renegade," "Always Obey Orders," etc.



"Ve divide now, damn you!" bellowed Hoffner

How could three white men use that incredible treasure, when they were surrounded by a horde of Ivory Coast savages?

LEADING UP TO THIS CONCLUDING INSTALLMENT

CAPTAIN JACK LYTTON could scarcely realize what had happened when he awoke on the beach of Africa's Ivory Coast, a ring of curious, menacing cannibal blacks staring at him. Then he remembered that his ship, the Delgoa, on which he had staked everything in a trip from Marseilles to Boma, had been wrecked. He knew that he must have been cast up on the shore.

He considered himself twice blessed when a hidden rifleman who spoke English with a cockney accent dispersed the savages, so saving one young American's carcass (so Lytton thought grimly) from the cannibal soup kettle. But the cockney-tongued rifleman failed to appear; and Lytton, famished, completely lost in the tangle of the jungle, and weaponless, stumbled on—he knew not where.

All at once he came upon a stockade and a hut. Two white men, a German

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and a half-caste, appeared. Suspiciously, they ordered him away from the place. And it was when he heard the half-caste speak that he knew that this man was the cockney who had saved his life. Callahan, the cockney called himself, and the German's name was Joe Hoffner. Lytton saw that they were illicit ivory hunters.

But he also found they possessed an ancient document which Lytton was able to translate. It proved to be the record of a treasure cache, an account of the *agadir* of one Bodmilcar Barca, a naval official of ancient Carthage. And there were old coins of gold, to prove that a fabulous treasure was hidden somewhere near. Lytton had found several of these gold coins decorating one of the Gueré savages which Callahan had killed. Hoffner and Callahan had other coins like it.

The three men outfitted a small expedition, and taking a faithful Senegalese native with them, they set out to locate Bodmilcar's *agadir,* which was in the heart of the Gueré country, some distance up the Nzi River.

But they had no more than found the *agadir*—still standing after many centuries—when they were attacked by the cannibals. Lining themselves along the battlemented tower of the old structure, they prepared to defend themselves and the treasure which they presumed must still be there.

CHAPTER VII *(Continued).*

THE ATTACK.

CRACK! Up on the tower Callahan, with commendable promptness, had opened fire. The barbaric shouts faltered an instant, then swelled to a terrifying crescendo.

Gasping, his legs wavering under him with fatigue, Lytton darted through a break in the tower's surface. Now Hoffner, his coarse blond hair gleaming bright, was safe inside. Last of all M'Gourra, his red *tarboush* askew and his yellow teeth bared in a contemptuous snarl, safely reached shelter.

While reaching for his rifle, Lytton had an impression of Callahan, a dramatic figure sharply outlined against the sky. *Crack!* Now the half-caste's khaki clad shoulder jerked spasmodically under the recoil of the short-barreled thirty-thirty, and a brief white gray plume of smoke licked out into the breathless air.

"Get 'em as they 'it—beach," Callahan yelled above the clamor rising from the attackers.

Crack-crack! With increasing frequency the heavy sporting rifle reports made the whole hoary ruin resound. But on that sable swarm now disembarking from the long war canoes the bullets of the wild-eyed defenders seemed to have no more effect than so many pebbles thrown at the surf.

Rows and ranks of hideous faces in masks, a maelstrom of gibbering, chattering visages daubed with paint and clay, eddied uncertainly, then surged up to the tower's base. Their spears sparkling like spray on a moonlit beach, a body of sable attackers swarmed up and over the lower walls of Bodmilcar's *agadir.* But here and there among their dark mass were brilliant splashes of color; the green, scarlet, blue and yellow parrot and cockatoo-feathered headdresses that shone bright in the fierce sunlight.

It was hard, Lytton realized, to resist an insane impulse to turn and flee—anyhow, anywhere—from this onrushing horde of spearsmen. Yet once the impulse was defeated, he found himself suddenly becoming calmer.

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"M'Gourra!" he yelled, as the first bright spears hissed overhead like deadly sunbeams. "Stop shooting! Break out ammunition. Load rifles as we pass 'em back!"

Simple savage he might be, but the Senegalese promptly obeyed, and with his strong yellow teeth began tearing off the ends of the green and yellow cartridge packets.

MORE spears came whistling towards the tower top. Of these, the large majority passed overhead, but others shattered themselves on the weatherbeaten stonework below and against the hastily built loopholes.

Lytton, as he threw his Winchester's sights onto the hippopotamus-tooth necklace of a stalwart chieftain and squeezed the trigger, now became aware of an unfamiliar, but by no means unpleasant, exhilaration. Amid that deafening gale of shouts, shrieks and yells, he neither heard the rifle's report nor felt its recoil. But the Gueré below flung arms convulsively skywards and toppled back off the wall among his followers who, spying the slain apes, now became seized by a fresh paroxysm of rage.

Hoffner, bareheaded and more than a little berserk, was bellowing incoherently in German and firing steadily, his blond head dropping low over his rifle's dark stock. Callahan, grazed by a spear, was cursing as only a denizen of Limehouse can blaspheme. Wider grew the ring of empty cartridge boxes on the rough stone floor of the tower top.

"Wot's that they're yelling?" Callahan barked at M'Gourra when the three whites simultaneously shot down a trio of gorgeously caparisoned chieftains and so brought a brief lull in the attack.

"Gedao! Gedao!" the Senegalese replied, ever stacking fresh cartridge packets before him. "Him Gedao here—witch doctor of the dead mans.—Savvy?"

"Yup—and a ruddy mess it's become, too!"

The Guerés, meanwhile, had retreated behind the wall above the beach, apparently to await the arrival of four laggard canoes.

After quickly cooling their rifle barrels with water from a canteen, the four men on the tower top gazed anxiously down at that wall upon which at least two or three dozen fantastically garbed corpses lay tumbled in grotesque attitudes.

"Well, we knocked off a few," remarked Lytton cheerfully. "Maybe they'll have had enough."

"Yus—they 'ad a-plenty.—And will yer 'ark at the wounded 'owling back o' the wall?"

"You don't know der Guerés," Hoffner growled and spat into the courtyard below. "Und anodder t'ing, don't let those *schweinhunde* take you alife. Safe dot last bullet for yourselves—I haff seen vot dey can do—it is *schrechlich!*"

THE German fell abruptly silent when Lytton caught up his rifle and fired hastily, but too late, at the dread figure of the witch doctor of the dead, who had suddenly emerged from his hiding place to bound across the courtyard and become swallowed up in the restless mass of savages gathering for a fresh attack. A deep, triumphant roar promptly went up from the assembled Guerés.

Lytton rapped out an impatient curse as he ejected the cartridge from his rifle.

"Damn! If I could have dropped old Gedao we might have thrown a real scare into those shines down there."

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M'Gourra sprang up suddenly. "Lib for come, sah!" he cried and leaped back to his post.

"Dis time iss der real business—dot yelling is Gedao bromising fetishes to the Guerés." Even while he spoke, Hoffner significantly jerked his brace of revolvers from their holsters and laid them conveniently to hand on those stones which had been dressed some two thousand odd years before.

Callahan, gray-faced but game, followed suit. "Let the blighters have volley fire," he grunted. "And pick the leaders."

"Yes. Try for Gedao!" Lytton yelled as he leveled his Winchester.

When the first spear points glimmered over the wall top, the adventurers on that scorching tower top arose as one and bent sweaty cheeks over the stocks of their rifles.

"Ready?" barked Lytton. "Aim!—Fire!"

Following the staccato roar of the reports and the brief clouds of acrid gray smoke, there sounded the musical tinkle of empty cartridge cases falling among the stones. A second and a third steady volley mowed down still more of the screaming attackers. Though a single bullet often struck down two and even three cannibals, the firing only partially checked the Gueré advance, and up, up, surged the black swarm, their feather headdresses, bone head sticks and ivory arm and leg ornaments gleaming white in the blazing sunlight.

Conscious that the bitter smell of smokeless powder was growing ever stronger in the air, Lytton kept searching the shifting mass of attackers for a glimpse of the witch doctor's orange-crested devil mask.

"Garn, look at 'em come!" choked Callahan when the foremost Guerés gained the base of the tower. The defenders, aware that death's cold hands were reaching out for them, now fired so rapidly that not even the nimble-fingered M'Gourra could load the two spare rifles fast enough.

ALL at once Lytton, on passing his rifle back, was alarmed to feel no hot weapon thrust into his hand. Half deafened, and wholly desperate, the American spun about; and to his dismay saw that M'Gourra had risen and was calmly unsheathing the murderous *coup-coup* which customarily swung at his side.

"Keep loading!"

M'Gourra vigorously shook his woolly head.

"Shootings no lib, sah. All gone."

With the rifle ammunition exhausted, Lytton knew that the end was now only a few moments off. He shouted out the bad news, and snatched out the thirty-eight revolver which Hoffner had loaned him. Six shots it held, five of which he would speed at the Guerés. As for the sixth—well, there was no use thinking about that. Loud rang the curses of the traders when, almost immediately, their rifle hammers fell on empty chambers.

"So long, Joe!" Callahan said with the bravery of despair. But Hoffner, his bull neck now turning a glowing scarlet, only s n a r l e d curses and whipped up his revolvers.

The dry *crack* of the rifles now gave way to the distinctive louder and shorter bark of revolvers of the three whites. Leaning far out over the masonry, they began to fire almost point blank into the contorted faces below. M'Gourra, meanwhile, had stripped off the ragged blue jersey which was his proudest possession, and with the broad bladed *coup-coup* in his hand,

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vented a screeching war cry and prepared to defend the gap in the tower wall.

Just then Lytton, through a faint haze of powder smoke, glimpsed that for which he had been watching. Yonder was Gedao's nodding crest of orange! He ceased firing, with no idea of how many shots he had fired. All he knew was that the witch doctor's figure was now in plain view. Breathing a fervent prayer, he fired hastily—*and missed!*

"Save the last one for yourself," Hoffner had said. But if he saved it for himself the witch doctor might escape.

Well aware that he was probably exposing himself to a death by indescribable tortures, Lytton held his fire until once more the witch doctor, the better to exhort his yammering followers, leaped upon the far walk of the courtyard. A heartbreaking test. Gedao at best presented a moving, difficult target, such as any marksman might be excused from missing. Nevertheless, drawing a deep breath, the doomed adventurer trained the coarse front sight of his thirty-eight on the witch doctor's middle, and with his whole hand squeezed the trigger.

Terrible seconds followed. Had he missed? A screeching warrior in a leopard mask was actually clawing at the edge of the tower! Lytton thrust out his revolver and pressed the trigger again. Only a dry click resulted! In a frenzy of despair, Lytton dodged the native's thrusting spear, and with the clubbed revolver rained terrible smashing blows on his hideous black head.

Scarcely had the attacker dropped back out of sight when a terrific clamor broke out. Frantically, Lytton wondered what had happened. Had he?—Yes, by heaven! He had killed or wounded the dreaded Gedao!

CHAPTER VIII.

GOLD MADNESS.

BACK from the very summit of that disputed yellow-gray tower fell the vari-colored mass of attackers shaken, no doubt, by the fearful howls arising from those of the Guerés who were bearing away the witch doctor. Gedao, Lytton quickly realized, while not dead, was at least badly wounded, for his ochre painted body squirmed madly in the arms of four or five stalwart followers. To the indescribable joy of the defenders, one dugout after another pushed off.

"Now!" bawled Hoffner, "*schussen Sie!* Shoot! While they retreat."

Callahan, sweat bathed, turned a grime-streaked face that seemed all teeth and staring eyes. "Revolver ammunition?" the half-caste snarled. "Where is it?"

"There is none.—It was left in the canoe," Lytton said simply. "And the rifle ammunition is also gone."

"*Was?*" Hoffner cried. "Of course there is more—" He dropped to his knees and began rummaging wildly among the tattered cartridge packets.

Though the others, for reasons of their own, joined in the search, all three became faced with the extremely unpleasant fact that their rifles were now as useless as walking sticks. Not one cartridge remained of all those that had been packed in those yellow and green boxes!

"M'Gourra!" Hoffner whipped about, and glancing down the short stair to the landing below, uttered an angry growl. "Poor devil! They haff got him already!"

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Sick at heart, Lytton pushed past Callahan and beheld the long-limbed Senegalese, lying awkwardly sprawled with a broad spear spilling a glistening crimson tide over his naked chest. The northern Negro was undoubtedly dead, and he lay there sprawled on the broken masonry, his stained teeth faintly glinting in the sun and his red *tarboush* fallen off.

"How many shots have you got left?" Callahan whispered to Lytton.

Acting purely on instinct, Lytton lied—promptly and convincingly.

"Two. How many have you got?"

Callahan scowled. "Only one—curse the ruddy luck! But Hoffner 'as three, and that's no 'elp. Pretty close, wasn't it?"

"Couldn't have been cut any finer," Lytton agreed. "God help us if those devils head this way again! We won't last longer than a snowball on a hot shovel."

"Aw, wot the 'ell! We're dished, even if they don't come back," the half-caste grunted.

"Why?"

"Don't yer see? They took our blessed dugout along with theirs."

AGAIN that sickening chill of despair invaded Lytton's soul, and even Hoffner was too shaken to indulge in his usual blasphemies at their misfortunes. In a dumb, frozen sort of way, Lytton forced himself into a show of resistance to Fate. He got up and made sure that the last spark of life had departed from M'Gourra's body, and then he placed the *tarboush* over the black's blunt scarred features while the other two profanely took inventory.

There was some food, Hoffner sullenly announced, and a canteen and a half of drinkable water. That, save for the lanterns and oil which Callahan had so crazily salvaged, was the total of their supplies.

"Abaht enough to starve on for three days," was Callahan's gloomy pronouncement. "We're jolly well dished, that's wot we are!"

Hoffner vented a rasping, mirthless laugh. "Cheer up, *bübe,* we'll all be chopped before dot time. — *Ja, en brochette* at a Gueré *kaffee klatsch.*"

"Oh, shut up!" Lytton's nerves were raw and quivering.

"One way or another," Callahan commented.

"What do you mean?"

"Well, cap'n, I don't see the bloomin' medicine bag nowheres, and it's a solemn fact if we don't get our regular tot o' quinine, we'll be belly up o' fever inside a day."

"That right, Hoffner?"

The German's great shaggy head inclined. "*Ja.* A pest hole like this breeds a dozen kinds—all fatal."

"Then," Lytton observed with forced cheerfulness, "if we're to get out at all, we'll have to get out of here quickly."

Spent, both physically and emotionally, the three doomed men seated themselves on mossy stones to contemplate a future that was lit by not a single ray of hope. Utterly inescapable was the fact that there were exactly four revolver bullets between them and death at the hands of the Guerés.

"Think they'll come back?" Lytton ventured at last.

"It all depends," Hoffner replied, and his sunken eyes wandered to the retreating flotilla which, deep laden with dead and wounded, was heading back to the south shore of the lake.

"*Ja,* I think maybe they come back this time—der *gla* iss with them. But

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maybe not; der Guerés are very afraid of der dark."

As quickly as they could, two of the three strengthened their retreat in the tower top while Callahan roamed below, occupied in salvaging as many of the spears as were still usable. When Lytton went down to join in the work, he was amazed to see how dense were the swarms of flies which had already gathered over those garish, blood-spattered figures dotting the battered walls and the courtyard.

Huge shadows, too, began to drift across the shambles in the court, and seven-foot wings beat the air around the tower top. A huge king vulture settled on a far corner of the ruin and sat there craning a horrible snake-like neck in all directions. Then others perched on the ruined *agadir*.

UPON one point the strangely assorted three agreed. M'Gourra must be buried, and the corpses of the fallen Guerés must be disposed of; for already the razor-like beaks of certain of the vultures were very busy. Accordingly, they worked until nearly sundown, dragging a succession of weirdly ornamented corpses over the wall facing the lake.

During the process, three more Carthaginian coins were found.

"Wot the bleedin' 'ell of it?" grunted the half-caste when Lytton pointed out this encouraging fact. "We ain't going to take 'em awye."

Over the wall they pitched the dead which, curiously enough, seemed to stir with life the instant that they struck the water. They promptly vanished beneath the green surface of the lake, and here and there the flash of a huge, armored tail betrayed the reason.

By the time that the last Gueré had raised a brief spurt of water, the little lagoon was fairly crawling with the hideous saurians. One giant crocodile even reared himself far above the surface to catch the limp carcass of one of the chimpanzees which Callahan pitched into the muddied waters.

As the sun, dipping behind the tangled forests which lay a generous mile and a half away, silhouetted them momentarily, Hoffner, with the back of his hairy hand, wiped from his lips the last shreds of the dried meat upon which the three had made a scanty and unsatisfying meal.

"*Himmel!* Vot a nonsense!—Ve might as vell eat efferything und die mit full bellies—"

"Oh, come on," Lytton protested, "we're not dead yet!" He shrugged and got up to stand staring at the sunset's blazing glare.

"Up against it, orl right," said Callahan, "'less we can get a canoe or make some kind of raft during the night."

"I'm a good swimmer," Lytton volunteered. "Maybe I could swim ashore and steal a canoe somewhere."

"*Nein.* Neffer could you svim to shore," was Hoffner's prompt assurance. "Der crocs vould haff you in two shakes. All ve can do iss maybe build a raft and hope der Guerés von't come back."

"Since there's nothing to do but wait till dark," Lytton observed after a little silence, "think I'll mosey around this charming spot. Want to come along, Callahan?"

"Sure, I'll give this bloomin' rubbish 'eap a look-see. But wot if we did find the treasure? We're dished any'ow."

"I vill go, too," the German announced. "It would be nice to be a millionaire, efen for a couple of hours."

By the red glare of the sunset, the three silently picked their way across

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the courtyard towards a door, most handsomely wrought with reliefs of struggling lions, which opened to the left. From behind this portal there exuded such a nauseous odor that Lytton gagged, and even Hoffner snatched a ragged red bandanna handkerchief from his back pocket and pressed it to his nose.

DAYLIGHT, though fading rapidly, was still sufficiently strong to reveal the cause of the smell. This gloomy apartment, decorated with marvelous reliefs depicting a war elephant attacked by Roman cavalry, had evidently been selected for the witch doctor's "laboratory." The walls were hung with the skulls of cats, pigs, monkeys and dogs, and a dozen other kinds of animals. Nor were human skulls lacking, either. A grisly heap of them lay in a far corner, like hideous, overgrown apples spilled from a basket.

It was all too evident that Gedao's apes had had the run of the interior of this ancient, single-storied structure. Their rancid body odor was very prevalent, and their excrement was everywhere.

"*Pfui!*—Vot a charnal house stink!"

"It ain't no blinkin' bed o' roses," Callahan agreed, "and that's Gawd's truth."

From the far side of this antechamber, filled with its amazing collection of skulls, gourds, pots and hide sacks, a wide door yawned in invitation. Still half choked by the stench, Lytton strode ahead, staring intently at the half-effaced sculptures adorning the walls of this forgotten stronghold. How fascinating to realize that in all probability theirs were the first white man's eyes to view them in two thousand years.

In this second chamber, however, the American learned how very incorrect was this assumption. On crossing the threshold he stumbled over some object which fell to the floor with a loud clang. Stooping, he caught up the obstacle and hurried to the door, where the sunset glare revealed it to be a badly rusted breast plate, adorned with beautiful gold arabesques.

From behind him came Hoffner's startled voice. "*Mein Gott,* look at this! It iss a modern rifle; a Mauser, such as I carried during my service!"

As their eyes became accustomed to the gloom, the amazed adventurers made out weapons of all kinds, lying heaped on the floor of this trophy room. Significantly, they were—*all* of them—the weapons of white men! Among rusting scraps of English, Spanish and Portuguese armor, lay Sixteenth Century arquebuses, Nineteenth Century cap guns, Eighteenth Century flint locks and several modern high powered rifles. Queer how much this jumbled heap of firearms resembled a gigantic pile of jackstraws.

"It vould seem," Hoffner observed with a hollow laugh, "that there haff been blenty of others here before us!"

"Yus, and it looks as if most of them had jolly well stayed right 'ere!"

WITH something like dread, Lytton stared at the mute testimony concerning the fate of those who had previously—intentionally or otherwise—penetrated to Bodmilcar's *agadir.*

"Let's see what's back of that," Lytton suggested after a brief silence.

"Yer got three shots, Hoffner," Callahan remarked. "Suppose yer goes first.—Ain't no telling wot we'll find next—"

Courageously enough, Hoffner drew his forty-five and started for

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that narrow door which yawned in black invitation.

But the American caught him by a perspiration-soaked sleeve. "Hold on. —No use barging in blind," he said. "We'd better get a lantern."

"Lantern? What lantern?"

Lytton forbore reproach and merely said, "Oh, when we landed, you know, Callahan salvaged a couple—along with a supply of kerosene."

Five minutes later the three cautiously descended a staircase which the lantern's rays proved had been frequently used. Turning slightly to the left, the passage led a few feet below the level of the courtyard.

"Goot masonry vork," Hoffner pointed out in a voice that trembled with a surpassing excitement. "Und look at der carvings!"

"Hell!" Callahan's disappointed curses boomed loud when the staircase terminated in a small, windowless stone room which was absolutely devoid of furniture. In fact, the only object enclosed in its handsomely carved walls was an ungainly statue of undoubted Punic origin.

"Wot the 'ell's that?" Callahan thrust forward his lantern to reveal the corpse of a scraggly, recently slain chicken. Nerves keyed too taut suddenly betrayed themselves in pungent curses.

Lytton alone was silent. So his last bid to snatch victory from the rending claws of defeat was to end in failure? For it seemed that there was nothing resembling treasure here.

"So dis is der shrine of Gedao?" Hoffner peered cautiously about an instant. Then, on seeing no more doors or windows, he turned a quivering, unlovely face. "It iss gone—*Gott im Himmel*—der treasure iss gone!"

Callahan's lips crept back from strong, uneven teeth as he faced the somber-eyed American. "Think fast, matey.—Yer got us into this and—"

"Shut up! Wait a second— Let me think; there's something more to this."

Lytton furiously probed his brain. Damn it, those gold coins of his had been worn scarcely at all! Ergo, they must have been recovered only recently. Then didn't it stand to reason that there could be no other Carthaginian ruin within a thousand miles?

"That treasure *must* be somewhere on this island," he announced and gave his reasoning. Then he held up one of the lanterns to the idol which, with its uncompromising slant eyes, stared at these three sunburnt dwellers standing on the threshold of death.

"LOOK!" remarked Hoffner abruptly. "His chest iss all greasy. Der rest of him iss not."

"*Hers*," Lytton corrected shortly. "This goddess is Tanit-Astarte.—See the sheaf of wheat in her left hand?"

"But w'y should 'Er Nibs's chest be greasy?" Callahan plainly wanted to cling to hope. "'Ow about 'er back, at the same level, Joe?"

"No grease there," Hoffner reported as his boot kicked aside the limp chicken carcass.

Why, Lytton feverishly asked himself, should the idol's breast be greasy? Was it one of the witch doctor's rituals to anoint the image with fat? Perhaps.—Did Gedao hug it during his religious frenzies? Possibly.

Lytton, struck by a sudden inspiration, lowered his lantern. Kneeling, he peered at the idol's base a long minute.

"Hold this," said he, with the rising inflection of suppressed excitement.

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"Think I've struck something. Callahan, put your hand on that figure's chest, and when I say 'shove,' give a good strong push."

So easily did the statue sink backwards under the first thrust that the effect was utterly uncanny, and Hoffner gave a startled cry. Evenly, and with the certainty of a modern drawbridge, Tanit-Astarte swung steadily backwards on her hinged base. Then, with scarcely a sound, she came to rest prone on the stone floor, with her raised pedestal revealing a square hole perhaps two feet on a side.

"*Mein Gott!*" Hoffner cried when the first excited shouts had died away. "How could dot have happened? Der idol should have fallen quick!"

"Counterpoises," Lytton explained in breathless tones. "Stand back there, Callahan. That air may be bad."

But Callahan, babbling incoherent prayers and curses, flung himself flat on the floor and lowered his lantern into the aperture.

"Maybe the air is bad, but wot I sees ain't!" the half-caste cried in a choked voice. "Look! Oh, Gawd in 'eaven, look!—Gold! 'Eaps and stacks of gold!"

"Get back!" Hoffner snarled, and almost tore his companion aside. "*Ja! Ja!*—Look at dot gold! *Mein Gott!* We are rich, Lytton! Rich! Rich!—Millionaires!"

A contemptuous, half grin on his unshaven and gaunt features, Lytton held the second lantern on high while his gold-crazed companions scrambled down a series of niches cut into the surface of that little rock-hewn chamber which appeared to lie directly beneath the idol room. His heart, however, was thudding like those drums in the forests across the lake. Gold! *Gold!* GOLD! By heaven, that thousand-to-one chance *had come through!* Had he saved those nearly forfeited oil lands? Had he, after all, given poor little Julie her chance in life? Would his mother once more be able to reoccupy her proper place in the world? Would he be able to go back to Cambridge?

Sweat, caused by more than the heat, trickled down his twitching face.—Gold! It was his! But—that room of European weapons. Would his rifle, along with Hoffner's and Callahan's, join the others on that dusty, mutely eloquent heap? All too likely!

HIS thin face grew even leaner as he peered down into the hole from which were rising ecstatic exultant cries. So absolutely maddened with delight were the ivory traders that neither of them would take the lantern from Lytton's hand, and he was forced to descend with its handle gripped between his teeth.

Once on the floor of the treasure room, Lytton stood swaying slightly, awed—nay, utterly dumfounded at the breath-taking vision which was revealed to his sunken and bloodshot gray eyes. Along three walls of this somber little treasury, small stone coffers stood stacked shoulder-high. Two of these Hoffner and Callahan had ripped open, and now the floor was literally paved with gold pieces.

"Great God! Why—why—look at that!"

Against the fourth wall was heaped a small mound of jeweled cups, golden salvers, ivory and gold figures, ponderous gold incense burners, jewel-and-gold mounted breastplates and miters. The American's skin itched unbearably, and his mouth went dry as the yellow rays of his lantern revealed the treasure in fuller detail. Now the whole mass

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gave off a dazzling, thousand-tinted radiance that made the senses reel.

Even Lytton became oblivious to the hot, stuffy air, to the fact that all their lives hung by a precarious thread. Uttering a queer, husky croak, he dropped on his knees along with the others. Babbling, chuckling, he caught up great handfuls of the smooth yellow disks and let them fall tinkling back into the coffer again. As through a glittering veil, he saw that the coins were of every possible size and shape; some were stamped with the effigy of an elephant, some with owls, some with figures of Baal. Most of them, however, were struck with the bold relief of a horse's head, that official emblem of the Carthaginian Republic.

Callahan turned, his yellowish face flushed and twitching. "Mates, we're rich—aye, richer nor the Dook o' Devonshire."

Hoffner, his evil, fat face bright with sweat, could not stop plunging his hairy arms up to the elbows into a ponderous stone chest filled to overflowing with glittering coins.

"*Ja, viel schoenes mädels* vill I haff. *Ach!* No more sweating, rotting und fighting fever on this *verdammt* coast.—Ha-ha-ha!" Crazily, the German exile's triumphant laughter made the shadow-ruled treasure room resound. "Vhy don't you laugh, Lytton, *mein* poy?"

THE American got to his feet, and one or two coins which had caught in the folds of his stained khaki trousers chinked richly as they fell back on the floor. He looked very tall as he stood there with the lantern between his feet; in fact, his unruly brown hair almost brushed the stone roof.

"I'll laugh, Hoffner," said he as he wiped great beads from his brow, "when we've got even a little of this gold safely back to Bingerville."

"Get it there? We'll get it there orl right," jabbered Callahan. "They can't kill us, now that we're bloomin' millionaires!"

The odd part of it was, Lytton realized, that the half-caste really believed what he had just said.

"Well, I wouldn't tempt them," Lytton grinned. "Meantime, let's see if we can find some jewels. There ought to be a-plenty somewhere. It's a cinch we can carry out but a small part of this damned heavy gold—"

"Garn!—We're goin' to take a 'eap of it!" the half-caste snarled. "'Cause most likely we mayn't get back in 'ere again; and if we did, the ruddy niggers will 'ave 'idden it somewhere."

Hoffner, scowling, ranged himself beside the snarling half-caste and made it a nice pair for Lytton to face with an empty gun!

"*Ja,* of course ve vill take all ve can.—Those *verdammt* niggers vill take it avay, vunce ve haff gone."

Lytton, however, was able to postpone a clash by conducting a search for a jewel casket such as presently appeared half hidden beneath a gorgeous, solid gold breastplate which bore an exquisitely modeled relief of Jupiter struggling with the Titans.

"Ow!—'Ere's a real find!"

Callahan crowded so close that the reek of his long, unwashed body made Lytton gasp. But Hoffner, all at once very somber and silent, stood aside as though thinking furiously.

Like small boys gathered about a forbidden book, the three adventurers bent forward when Lytton thrust that small, solid gold casket into the lantern light. A gasp went up as the American raised the lid and there sprang out into

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the stuffy little treasury a blaze of colors only comparable to the aurora borealis. Pearls, emeralds, rubies and diamonds all cast out a maddening, enchanting glare.

Out shot Hoffner's huge paw, and he would have seized a handful of gems had not Lytton slammed the lid down on his fingers.

"Quit that!" he snapped and swiftly stepped clear. "There'll be no division until we get back to the seacoast."

"Ve divide now, damn you!" Hoffner bellowed, and would have snatched out his gun had not Callahan suddenly entered the dispute with leveled revolver.

"Lytton's right," he rasped. "Stand back, yer bloody Boche, or I'll give yer wot-for!"

"Let's take it easy," the American urged. "We're all on edge, and there'll be plenty of time to think about the division—if we ever get out of this mess. But first, we'd better get back up on that tower and see what's going on. We can talk up there—"

"You haff no objections if I take a few souvenirs?" Hoffner demanded with venomous deference, and without waiting for the invited reply, stooped to fill every available pocket with gold.

WHEN Callahan, not to be outdone, followed suit, Lytton seized the opportunity to scramble up and out of that cell-like treasury. No telling just what these greed-maddened idiots might do. As he groped his way out, Lytton perceived very clearly that, come what might, he must do one thing or he was lost. Bluff might work for a little while, but sooner or later, a showdown would come. Against that deadly moment he must somehow get one of those loaded guns.

"Hurry up, you two!" he called back down the resounding stairs. "It's damned near dark."

In fact, night had descended like a smothering purple-black cloak by the time Lytton managed to drag the two traders from their orgy of gold worshiping. They became somewhat sobered, however, at hearing those distant drums thudding and thumping with increasing vigor and persistency.

"*Gott!* Dot iss bad—very bad," Hoffner grunted uneasily, and peered off into the gathering gloom. "Long before this time of night der Guerés stop sending their war talk."

"Yer don't think they'd put on a night attack?—Cripes, wouldn't it be a rum go to git knocked orf, now that we're bloomin' millionaires?"

Hoffner grunted, and slapped a mosquito that had lit on his forehead. "Don't vorry, boys, neffer haff I heard of a Gueré night attack.—Und very soon ve can start to vork on dot raft."

But the three never even left the tower to begin work. Scarcely had the last big stars come into sight when the dull *chunk-chunk* of many paddles came stealing over water which was sending upwards ghostly white feathers of sour-smelling vapor.

"Canoes!—Gawd, the Guerés are comin' back!"

Once the sound was positively identified, Callahan stood up, quivering and cursing like a man possessed. It was not right, he sniveled—after all the risks they had run, after the fight they had put up—to lose their gold and their lives as well. Hoffner was all for going back to the treasury and dying there if need be.

"I vould die happier half buried in gold!" said he with a macabre laugh. "Vot's der matter, Lytton? Vhy don't you say notting?"

The American was sitting apart,

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staring fixedly at their scanty equipment, scattered over the floor of the tower top. There, neatly stacked to one side, stood the five rifles, as useful in this impending crisis as so many crowbars. Beside them was a thick sheaf of spears which the defenders had collected; and beyond the food haversacks were the water canteens, together with the one which held the oil for the lanterns. Nothing more was on the top of the tower. They were doomed; at last, Lytton was on the point of admitting it to himself.

Suddenly revolt, furious, desperate revolt, shook his soul. That big canteen of kerosene caught his eye again, and a minute mechanism clicked in his brain. He leaped to his feet.

"Quick, boys, pick up those guns! There may be—yes, by heaven, there's a thin chance for us yet!"

CHAPTER IX.

DEVIL FIRE.

CONFIDENT of the potent, ghost-defying spells with which Gedao, the witch doctor of the dead, had shielded them, three hundred picked spearsmen raised the beat of their paddles a little. Nevertheless, many eyes were wide with anxiety, for until this day no Gueré had dared to put foot on that island which was famous as the haunt of evil leopard men; of *zombies,* those dreaded animated corpses—the living dead; and, worst of all, of Gla, the Great Chastiser. True, once in five years, certain greater and lesser chiefs among the natives paddled out to the island where, for an elaborate consideration, Gedao dispensed sage advice and certain bright yellow coins which, having come from a far land where the gods themselves dwelt, were known to be very, very potent talismen.

His skinny body a-sway, the injured witch doctor of the dead sat in the leading canoe, his pointed teeth bared in a ferocious grin. Decidedly, the white men would be at a hopeless disadvantage in the dark—they could not see to shoot. Thus reasoned Gedao, and while trying to forget the anguish of his wounded shoulder, meditated upon just which tortures would be most appropriate.

"We draw near, O mighty Grandfather of All Wisdom," muttered Blo-di, war king of all the Gueré villages.

Gedao glanced over a fur ruff, tastefully fashioned from the black and white hide of a night howler monkey, and his crafty old eyes narrowed in satisfaction. Good! The ten canoes were keeping close together and fairly flying over the misty water towards that dim gray outline which the starlight hinted at, rather than revealed. Trapped, nicely trapped, were the white men. Having no canoe, thanks to the crocodiles, they could not have left the island, and therefore they must very shortly fall into his hands.

While that dim gray outline of the *agadir* grew larger and more distinct, the witch doctor of the dead ran a dark, speculative eye over the nearer canoes. He found himself pleased with the singularly horrible effect which those special, demon-defying designs, all done in white, had given to the black bodies of his followers. Even more pleased was he to note those dense clumps of spears which twinkled dully in the starlight.

When the Island of the Dead was not forty canoe-lengths away, Blo-di bent low and muttered something in Gedao's ear. When the witch doctor nodded, King Blo-di caught up a

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sambur horn and blew a long, wailing note. Promptly the shadowy, crowded canoes closed in and formed in line, for the principle of mass attack was a tactic highly favored not only by Blo-di, but by Gedao as well.

GREAT and very pleasant was the surprise of both these worthy gentlemen when, from that pale, death-dealing tower came no sound, not even the crack of a single rifle. When the silence remained unbroken by even a shout, the warriors began to steal sidelong glances at each other. What was this? They had expected, and were prepared for, a great deal of noise. This unbelievable stillness was therefore a trifle disconcerting. The witch doctor of the dead had indeed made them proof against ghosts and bullets—but what if he had overlooked something?

Somewhat shaken by that amazing silence, the black warriors faltered a little when their canoe bows grated on that narrow beach beneath the tower. They paused. Silence, broken only by the eery plaint of a fever owl—or was it the cry of a *zombie?*—ruled over the Island of the Dead.

They who had come to shout and fight, slunk uncertainly up to the wall and hesitated there. Even the great Gedao looked uncertain. Blo-di, with a real general's sense, realized that the morale of the warriors was fading and himself sprang to the wall to lead a silent and absolutely undisputed advance to the foot of the tower.

Suddenly a wild yell went up when from the tower top a long arc of fire soared out into the tense darkness, described a vivid parabola, and at its extremity, broke into a rain of flaming drops. Startled shrieks arose.

"'Tis the breath of Gla!" screeched one of the warriors, above the wails of those upon whom the fire had fallen.

The Gueré ranks wavered, then halted when a second dazzling lance of fire raked the sky. Missing the canoe for which it was intended, it landed full in the troubled waters, where it drifted flaming brightly! Fire burning on water? This was witchery!

Horrified, the dark spearsmen stared at the phenomenon. Even Gedao trembled as the fire spread over the surface of the lake, the blue and yellow flames licking eerily upwards. Clearly, this was the devil's work, against which Gedao's fetishes were impotent. Did not those howls of agony prove his defeat? A wavering wail of fear broke out when that dark and silent tower top now emitted t h r e e dazzling, bright tongues of flame!

"Fly! Fly!"—B e w i l d e r e d, the Guerés milled back and forth, and had there been a careful watcher among them, he might have detected a thin black rod, projecting from the tower's parapet just before a sixth fiery arc shot out into the night. But happily, there was no such hero among the terrified Guerés.

WITH incredible speed, the odors of singed hair, of the acrid reek of burning wood, and the stench of scorched flesh went billowing up to the tower top. Panic-stricken, helter-skelter, the Guerés howled out their terror and dashed for the nearest canoe. Dozens of eager hands caught up the first paddles that were discovered, and struck out madly, with no more purpose than to escape from the vicinity of that devil-haunted tower!

"Now—shoot!" Lytton shouted as he dropped the hot rifle barrel from which, with the aid of a plunger im-

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provised from strips of belt leather attached to ends of iron cleaning rods, he had projected the flaming oil, as a hypodermic syringe can be made to spurt fluid far across a room.

On the floor still smouldered those rag torches with which the kerosene streams had been set afire as they left the barrel muzzle. Loose drops of kerosene smouldered, and the pungent reek of the burnt rags brought tears to the eyes of the three who, for the first time, now thrust cautious heads above the top of the tower.

"Shoot!" came Lytton's crafty advice. "Shoot any one who goes near that furthest canoe, Hoffner."

At first glance, it was clear that the Guerés, in their frantic retreat, might overlook that particular canoe. Outlandish, weirdly garbed figures became silhouetted as one of the canoes, set on fire by the rain of flaming kerosene, began to burn fiercely. That should help the marksmanship.

Breathlessly, Lytton studied the beach. Fervently he hoped that the traders would empty their revolvers, for in that case the situation would take on a decidedly pleasanter outlook for him. That scene in the treasury had been just a pleasant little forecast of what he might expect if the *status quo* remained.

Hoffner and Callahan, however, clung to their last shots with distressing firmness, until two savages dashed on down the beach and attempted to launch the ponderous dugout.

"Shoot, you fools!" yelled Lytton; and Hoffner, aware that the canoe had actually begun to move, fired twice.

"Why didn't you shoot?" Lytton snapped at Callahan.

The half-caste's yellowish features fell into a truculent half sneer. "Why didn't you?"

"I couldn't—that is—" Lytton made a desperate effort to gloss over his slip. "I forgot to throw off the safety catch."

Though the explanation was quick and plausible, there remained in Callahan's hot and smoky features a new expression. Clearly, he had realized that while his and Hoffner's forty-fives still held a shot each, Lytton's must be empty.

"AND now vhat?" Hoffner demanded, rubbing his singed chin and eyebrows. "Ve must get avay from this *verdammt* island so fast as ve can. *Ja,* already I can feel those fever mosquitoes biting efferywhere."

"Check! We've got to get away while Gedao's boy friends are still scared stiff.—They might be back again to-morrow."

Callahan, redly revealed by the flames of the canoe, was still smiling evilly as he nodded briefly. "Right-o, we'll load the blinkin' loot in that dugout, and split a gut gettin' out of Blo-di's country afore sun-up."

Promptly, the three went scrambling below, increasingly aware of those whining, deadly little insects whose bite would spell delirium and death if quinine were not found before another night fell.

For the next half hour the three sweated and strained like beings possessed—not by one but by many devils. Up from the fetid depths was passed the jewel casket, and the most richly bejeweled articles in the treasury were hauled up, to be later deposited in the dugout. The latter was revealed by the wavering yellow glare cast by the flames of the other boat.

"That's pretty near enough," panted the American, when of the dugout's side there remained but a scant four

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inches above the water. "We've got plenty."

"The 'ell you say!—She'll 'old a lot more yet."

"That's enough."

"Oo says so?" By the uncertain light of the burning canoe Callahan's lean, bronze-hued face had grown distinctly menacing.

"I do! Let's be sensible. If we overload, we'll very likely lose everything and—"

"Two inches of freeboard iss enough." Hoffner's small blue eyes were taking on a curious gleam, and Lytton felt rather than saw the German's big body tensing itself.

Unmistakably, the traders were of the same mind. On the faces of both greedy, dangerous lines predominated. Oh, God, why had he so carelessly emptied his pistol? Bluff was now his only hope—and a very faint one it was, too.

"Two inches?" Lytton urged. "You must be crazy to think so! And don't forget, we may have to shoot the rapids if we get chased."

"We can bury some o' the oof on the bank, afore we gets near the rapids," Callahan grunted. And balancing on the balls of his feet like a wary prize fighter, he drew a step nearer.

Wearily wiping sweat from his eyes, Lytton shook his head. "Maybe. But we're sunk if we make the dugout too heavy to paddle fast, in case we get chased.—Look at all that! Surely, we've got enough."

"*Nein!*" the German snarled. "Dot treasure vill not be here if ve try to get back some other time. Stand back—!"

"No more time for arguing, this *is* enough," Lytton snapped and, stepping back, whipped out his revolver. "Put 'em up, both of you. I'm not going to let filthy greediness ruin the whole business. Keep your hands up, Hoffner, or I'll drill you!"

Cursing horribly, Hoffner obeyed, but the half-caste did not. Instead he jerked his forty-five from the front of his belt.

"Yus? Yer can go to 'ell, Mister Lytton, and will—if yer don't put up yer dukes, jolly quick!"

LIKE a chill tide, a wave of bitterness swept Lytton's soul as he realized the half-caste had guessed the truth. It was now merely a question of hours before one or the other of these outcasts would murder him in cold blood. Obviously, they were not gentry of the sort willingly to accept a third instead of a half of the treasure, merely for the sake of whatever ethics might be involved.

"Say, vot iss—?"

"Lytton's gun's empty," Callahan rasped. "You an' me, Joe, 'as orl the shots we've got left." He whirled on Lytton. "You see, cockey? And now we'll load some more o' that gold."

"Okay, boys," Lytton sighed. "You're doing a foolish thing—but have it your way."

"I intend to," Hoffner grunted as he tucked Lytton's thirty-eight into his belt of plaited rawhide.

At the word "I," Callahan glanced up sharply, and from the tail of his eye Lytton saw the half-caste nod once to himself, as though he had reached a definite decision.

"Und you, Lytton," Hoffner rumbled as he turned back towards the ruin, "you vill do chust vhat I—und Callahan—tell you. Ve are reasonable fellers, so if you are troublesome you vill only be so vunce. If you behave, you vill get your share."

"Right," said Lytton. "I know when I'm licked." To himself he

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thought, "Oh, they'll give me my share all right—a six ounce bullet in the back. But hold on. Maybe they won't dare do it that way. They each have only one shot! I wonder now—?"

As Lytton, under the ever watchful eyes of the traders, staggered down to the dugout, bent under more of those crude money bags which they had improvised from the scanty loin cloths of the fallen Guerés, he feverishly studied his position. Damn it! This was very like a game of chess; each of the three white men had a separate offensive and defensive value. Could any one of the three checkmate the other two? The first problem to decide was to foresee when his enemies would most probably make their attempt to murder him. Since they'd need him to help make the portage around the rapids, he was reasonably safe up to that point.

There was another thought, too. Each of those rascals had by now realized that by shooting the prisoner he would render himself powerless against the other partner. In other words, if, with his own last shot, Hoffner murdered Lytton, he would then be at Callahan's very doubtful mercy; and vice versa, if Callahan shot Lytton first.

IT was dangerously low in the water that the dugout rode when the two traders were at last satisfied that it could hold no more. And trouble began again when Hoffner started to step into the stern position.

"Oh, no you don't!" Callahan growled, and shook his head violently. "I ain't turnin' my back to no Joe 'Offner. I'm goin' to paddle aft."

Hoffner drew himself up, shaggy head thrust forward. "*Nein, du schwein!* Do you think I vould sit up in der bow and haff you behind me—you mangy mongrel?"

"By Gawd!" Callahan's lean face became contorted in a terrible expression, and his hand flew to the butt of the gun in his waistband.

Lytton's voice coldly cut in on the dispute. "Hold on, you two. We can't go bumping each other off, if any of us are to get out of this alive."

"Vot iss—?"

"I've figured a way out of this trouble. Suppose you give me a spear."

"Fat chance o' that, cockey," sneered Callahan. "We ain't that foolish."

"Please," Lytton insisted. "It's really to the advantage of both of you, and it leaves me where I was before." Would they listen? Lytton feverishly prayed that they would. God, he *must* think clearly! Here he had this enormous wealth, and all that it meant, actually in his possession. It lay there in the canoe, not two feet away, and yet he was doomed to death as surely as any poor wretch on the gallows.

Callahan's voice, harsh with suspicion, beat on his eardrums. "Well, speak up!"

"With the spear, I sit in the middle of the canoe, facing Hoffner—just far enough away so I can't reach him with a single lunge—"

Both fierce brown faces came closer, suspicion written all over them.

"If I try to spear Hoffner," he continued, "he can easily shoot me first. So naturally, I'm not going to try. See?" The American's hollow eyes fixedly regarded one and then the other. "If Hoffner tries to shoot you in the back, Callahan, I can—and will—spear him."

A deep silence fell over that narrow beach below the wall, a silence in which the booming of a crocodile on a shoal not far away sounded as loud as the thunder of a kettledrum. Incessantly,

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the mosquitoes whined and bit with vicious little stabs. Would the mutual distrust of these outcasts prompt them to accept? Were they smarter than he thought; and would they therefore perhaps be able to turn his own risky plan against him?

CALLAHAN spoke at last. "Sounds reasonable, Joe, and hit's the only way I can see to protect everybody. Hif this bloke Lytton tries to kill hus, we can beat him to the draw. 'E's got only a spear, and we've got guns. Besides 'e'll keep us from tryin' to drill each other."

Lytton's respect for Callahan went up several notches.

"So I'm at least a spear to the good," the bone-weary American told himself when they got aboard.—Not that he was out of the woods by a long shot. They'd surely murder him sooner or later, probably with a spear, when his back was turned. But still, he was distinctly in a better position than he had been a few moments before.

With the glassy eyes of Gedao's stiffening followers upon them, the three pushed off. Tiny wavelets lapped dangerously near the gunnels as they headed for that outlet of the lake which was the Nzi River.

In the bow, Callahan swung his clumsy paddle, his ragged and sweaty back propped against a long, low mound of treasure. Gold coins were glistening on the dugout's bottom, for several of the improvised bags had burst.

Next there came a large, glittering heap of censers, chalices, cups and jewelled headdresses.

Lytton, using the heap for a back rest, could feel a corner of the jewel casket digging into his back as he sat looking pensively at the heavy Gueré spear which lay on his lap, across the thwarts.

Five feet aft, and just out of reach of a spear stab, sat Joe Hoffner, his torn shirt fluttering in the night breeze, and his shock of stiff blond hair showing up like a pale crown. From a lanyard about his muscle-corded neck dangled his cocked and loaded revolver, and his eyes were never still. Like a crouching leopard the German seemed to be watching—watching and waiting for the right second to lash out.

CHAPTER X.

A QUICK END.

TO the surprise and relief of all three adventurers, the return trip was quite without incident. The roar of the rapids was fading rapidly. Whether it was because the Guerés were still in the grip of that terror which Lytton's ingenious flame throwers had inspired, or whether they had suffered enough losses at the hands of these three white men to make them fearful, there was no telling. But the dim, mist-shrouded night had yielded nothing more startling than the blowing of hippopotamuses and the harsh croak of herons fishing on wide, lily-pad-covered flats.

"By Gawd!" Callahan turned a sweaty, exultant face, "I believe we're goin' to get awye with it. Wot s'ye, 'Offner?"

The German nodded heavily, but said nothing, even when the river widened into broad, starlit reaches.

Lytton, meanwhile, felt badly shaken at his failure to find an answer to his problem in this deadly game of chess. Now it looked as if all his planning and his struggles had surely been in vain.

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As they had carried the last two bags of loot across the portage back there, Lytton, a cold hand squeezing his vitals, had noted the two murderers pausing in the center of the trail for a brief but earnest consultation. When they had finished talking they had nodded, and with smiles on their lips had come plodding on down the river bank. Murder now hung in the heavy air, which was beginning to smell of dawn.

Because of the mutual suspicion of the two traders, Lytton reasoned that he would be safe until the dugout was once more moored outside of that ramshackle godown at the mouth of the Nzi.

Then, when the other two had a fresh ammunition supply, his long-postponed execution would take place. He felt a little sick at the thought of dying with a bullet through his body.

As he sat there clutching that broad-headed spear, Lytton marvelled that this red-yellow metal such as was in the dugout could so completely disrupt and madden men. With the corner of the jewel chest digging in the small of his back, he began a final and furious assault on his problem. By the light of the paling sky, he could see Hoffner staring at him speculatively, before his gaze wandered to linger on Callahan's wide and wiry shoulders. How could he juggle this balance of power?

SUDDENLY, like the flare of a photographer's calcium light, came that illusive idea!—Maybe! Yes, there was just a chance it might work. If not— Well, it was going to be "curtains" for him anyhow.

Apparently lulled by the monotonous dip and swish of the paddles, Lytton's body relaxed a little. Yes, that was his only chance. These two had probably agreed upon some plan, for he saw that now each of the traders had placed a spear beside him! That was significant, surely.

Like machinery which slowly gathers speed, so Lytton's heart began to thud when, amid the dawn light, he recognized the godown, but a speck on that distant point out of which grew three palms. How peaceful it was in this gray hour; for hereabouts the tea-colored river was slow and glassy, and when the sun rose a little higher the bottom might be plainly seen, perhaps ten feet below.

Gradually, Lytton's dishevelled brown head inclined. He seemed to be overcome by weariness. A lock of his tangled brown hair slipped over his forehead, obscuring his eyes.

Before long, Hoffner shifted his gaze from that speck on the point to the face of the drowsing American. His eyes narrowed as, very gradually, Lytton's singed and blistered hands relaxed until the Gueré spear slipped silently overside, quite unobserved by Callahan who, in the bow, was plying his paddle and humming snatches of an obscene song.

Now the spear had quite vanished, and with it that restraining balance of power. What a nice target Callahan made there in the bow!—A bullet for him, a quick stab for Lytton, and all this golden hoard would belong to Joe Hoffner—as he had intended all along. With each swing of his heavy torso, Hoffner hitched the lanyarded revolver higher into his lap, until it dangled squarely over his loose, filthy belly, and within easy reach.

Placidly, Lytton continued to nod, even when Hoffner suddenly stopped paddling and with his left hand caught up the Gueré spear. His right swiftly levelled the revolver at Callahan's

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sweat-marked back—right at that dark streak between the half-caste's shoulder blades.

The vicious *crack!* of the revolver sent plover and sandpipers along the shore to rising in loudly whistling flocks, and something stirred Lytton's hair. A terrible cry split the early morning stillness, then a loud splash. The dugout now contained but two men.

"*So!*" The spear in Hoffner's hand flashed up, and the rising sun caught its point. Then it wavered and disappeared—for with a strong surge Lytton had deftly upset the canoe.

STRUCK by a rain of falling treasure, Lytton instantly won free. Magnificent swimmer that he was, he shot through the amber-hued current with the intention of rising directly behind Hoffner. Immediately he spied the dark outline of the German, swimming strongly above him—but still clutching his spear! Not so good, that spear!

Lytton, with the sureness of an otter, shot to the surface behind the German murderer. His wiry brown arm slid swiftly about the throat of the big man. Furious were the German's struggles—and he proved to be no mean swimmer. Amid a wild flurry of spray, Lytton caught his breath. And surging backwards, he dragged the heavier man under the warm brown waters.

Then followed an even more furious struggle. Hoffner, infinitely stronger, for all his gin-guzzling, sought desperately to shorten his grip on the spear haft and to use its head daggerwise. Once — twice — Lytton felt a keen point slash at his flailing legs. All too well he realized that if Hoffner could manage to shorten his grip on that spear a little more, and to deliver just one jab between the ribs, the matter would be settled once and for all.

Desperately, Lytton squeezed the German's bristle-covered throat. Inner voices shrieked a warning to Lytton's burning brain! "*You must not lose!* You must not let go!"

Around and around they threshed, the blood from Lytton's two wounds clouding the amber current. Would that damned German *never* drown? Panic plucked at Lytton's brain when his own lungs felt as if an iron band were crushing them. Now he lost all sense of direction. He had not the faintest idea which way lay bottom or surface.

Torturing æons of time dragged by, and before Hoffner let his spear go scaling down towards the gold-sprinkled sand of the bottom, Lytton seemed to be swimming in a blood red sea.

Reaching over his own shoulders, Lytton tried desperately to gouge the eyes from his indomitable assailant.

Half blinded, merely clinging on through a sense of desperation, Lytton felt the German's fingernails gouging strips of skin from his face. One of them grazed his eyelid. His breath, poisonous now, struggled to escape. Only the thought of Julie and that tired old woman half the world away made him hang on.

Just as a mad buzzing filled his brain, a sudden great burst of round, white bubbles told him that Hoffner had taken water into his lungs. Quickly, the German ceased to struggle, and when Lytton released him, the murderer's ungainly form went drifting sluggishly towards the gold-speckled bottom.

Purple-faced, and with his head

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nearly splitting, Lytton shot to the surface, caught his breath, and hastily struck out for the not too distant shore.

AROUND noon that same day a canoe, paddled by a solitary white man who seemed on the verge of exhaustion, came floating down to the slovenly trading post on the Nzi's delta. The white man's face was raw with many scratches, and he bore two spear cuts in his right leg. But with his knees he secured a small, square box gleaming with gold.

Back upstream an upright pole in the river, not far from the shore, marked the spot where the dugout had overturned. Yet the pole seemed lonely and quite innocent. A little diving would quickly salvage the balance of the treasure of Bodmilcar — but nothing would ever be found of Messrs. Callahan and Hoffner! The crocodiles had long since seen to that.

THE END.

Mexico's Chinese Express

ONE of the most curious episodes in Mexico's story of railway transportation was the inauguration of train service from the capital southward to the city of Oaxaca—the birth of the "Chinese Express."

It was in the early days of railroad building in the republic and little or nothing of steam-driven locomotives was known to the most intelligent native, while to the ignorant peon, an engine or a train was a creature of a nightmare if anything at all. When, after months of labor, the tracks had been laid over the route connecting the capital with the important southern city, a locomotive was assembled in Mexico City by imported mechanics and the builders of the road launched a quest for an engineer and a fireman.

A score of the most intelligent natives were assembled and herded toward the unfired locomotive. They examined it and listened attentively to explanatory remarks concerning its operation. A prospective crew dubiously followed the order to mount the cab and still more dubiously followed instructions to fuel it. But, when the fire was started beneath the boiler and steam, sparks and smoke bellowed from its funnel, the natives fled in superstitious terror. There wasn't a man in all the crew who could be found ten minutes after the first "chug" terrified the assembly.

After a lengthy search two Chinese—fatalists, they were—consented to climb into the cab, and, under the superintendency of the alien mechanics, guided the smoke belching monster along the right-of-way. That first trip sent wild stories of a fire breathing dragon invading Oaxaca and destroying the villages circulating throughout the republic and it was weeks before the *rancheros* owning farms near the tracks could get peons to work for them.

Since that day, the train has been operated by Orientals and is still known as the "Chinese Express."

Paul Gibson.

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MEN of DARING

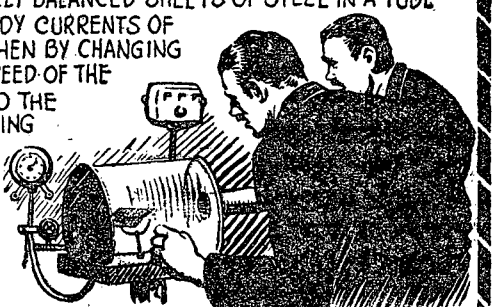
By Stookie Allen

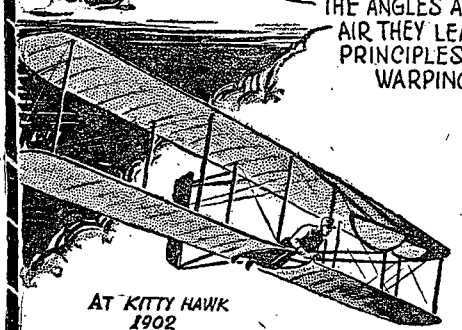
FIRST TO FLY!

ORVILLE WRIGHT WAS BORN IN DAYTON, OHIO, IN 1871. HIS FATHER WAS A CLERGYMAN WHO HAD ONCE INVENTED A TYPEWRITER. ORVILLE INHERITED AN INVENTIVE MIND. HE WAS AN EXPERT AT MAKING KITES AND TOY HELICOPTERS. SOON HE AND HIS BROTHER WILBUR WERE REPAIRING AND BUILDING BICYCLES FOR A LIVING. ORVILLE WAS FOREVER READING OF FLYING EXPERIMENTS AND FOR HOURS HE WOULD LIE ON A HILLSIDE AND STUDY THE FLIGHT OF BIRDS—POINTING OUT TO HIS BROTHER THAT THE BIRD WAS REALLY AN AIRPLANE.

ORVILLE WRIGHT

THE BROTHERS NOTICED THAT THE GULLS KEPT AFLOAT FOR HOURS BY THE WIND CURRENTS PUSHING AGAINST THE CURVED SURFACE OF THEIR WINGS. THE WRIGHTS PLACED DELICATELY BALANCED SHEETS OF STEEL IN A TUBE THROUGH WHICH STEADY CURRENTS OF AIR WERE BLOWN. THEN BY CHANGING THE ANGLES AND SPEED OF THE AIR THEY LEARNED THE PRINCIPLES OF WING WARPING.





AT KITTY HAWK 1902

IN 1900 AT KITTY HAWK, N.C. THEY BEGAN BUILDING A GLIDER. IN 1902, ORVILLE MADE ONE SUCCESSFUL FLIGHT AFTER ANOTHER. MANY TIMES HE CRASHED AND WAS ALMOST KILLED, BUT THEY HAD NOW CONQUERED THE AIR! ONLY AN ENGINE WAS NEEDED TO MAKE THE GLIDER AN AIRPLANE. BUT MOTOR COMPANIES THOUGHT THEY WERE CRAZY WHEN THEY WROTE ASKING FOR "A GAS ENGINE FOR A FLYING MACHINE." SO THEY BUILT THEIR OWN.

This feature appears in ARGOSY every week

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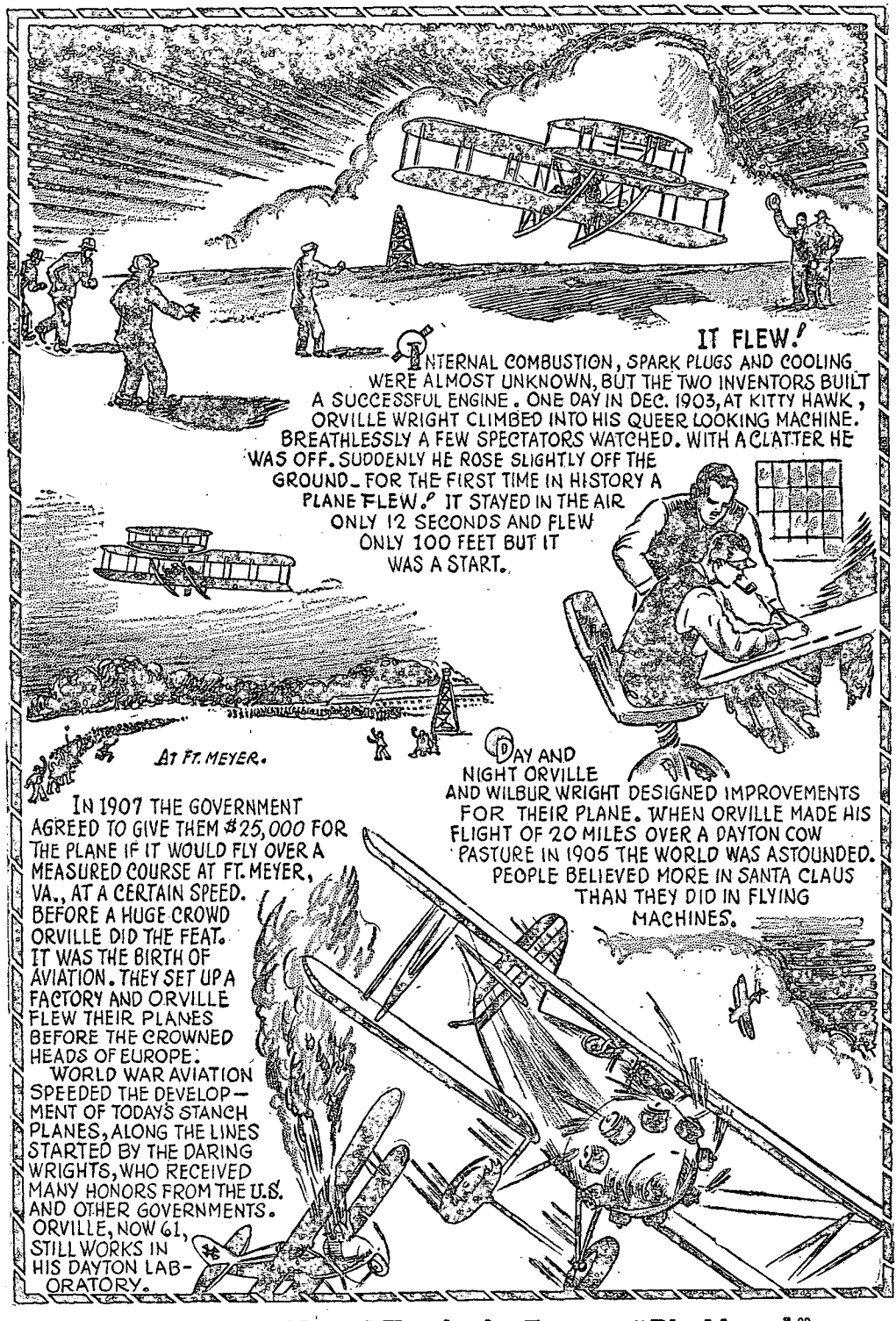
IT FLEW!
INTERNAL COMBUSTION, SPARK PLUGS AND COOLING WERE ALMOST UNKNOWN, BUT THE TWO INVENTORS BUILT A SUCCESSFUL ENGINE. ONE DAY IN DEC. 1903, AT KITTY HAWK, ORVILLE WRIGHT CLIMBED INTO HIS QUEER LOOKING MACHINE. BREATHLESSLY A FEW SPECTATORS WATCHED. WITH A CLATTER HE WAS OFF. SUDDENLY HE ROSE SLIGHTLY OFF THE GROUND - FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY A PLANE FLEW! IT STAYED IN THE AIR ONLY 12 SECONDS AND FLEW ONLY 100 FEET BUT IT WAS A START.
AT FT. MEYER.
DAY AND NIGHT ORVILLE AND WILBUR WRIGHT DESIGNED IMPROVEMENTS FOR THEIR PLANE. WHEN ORVILLE MADE HIS FLIGHT OF 20 MILES OVER A DAYTON COW PASTURE IN 1905 THE WORLD WAS ASTOUNDED. PEOPLE BELIEVED MORE IN SANTA CLAUS THAN THEY DID IN FLYING MACHINES.
IN 1907 THE GOVERNMENT AGREED TO GIVE THEM $25,000 FOR THE PLANE IF IT WOULD FLY OVER A MEASURED COURSE AT FT. MEYER, VA., AT A CERTAIN SPEED. BEFORE A HUGE CROWD ORVILLE DID THE FEAT. IT WAS THE BIRTH OF AVIATION. THEY SET UP A FACTORY AND ORVILLE FLEW THEIR PLANES BEFORE THE CROWNED HEADS OF EUROPE.
WORLD WAR AVIATION SPEEDED THE DEVELOPMENT OF TODAY'S STANCH PLANES, ALONG THE LINES STARTED BY THE DARING WRIGHTS, WHO RECEIVED MANY HONORS FROM THE U.S. AND OTHER GOVERNMENTS. ORVILLE, NOW 61, STILL WORKS IN HIS DAYTON LABORATORY.

Next Week: Edward Teach, the Famous "Blackbeard"

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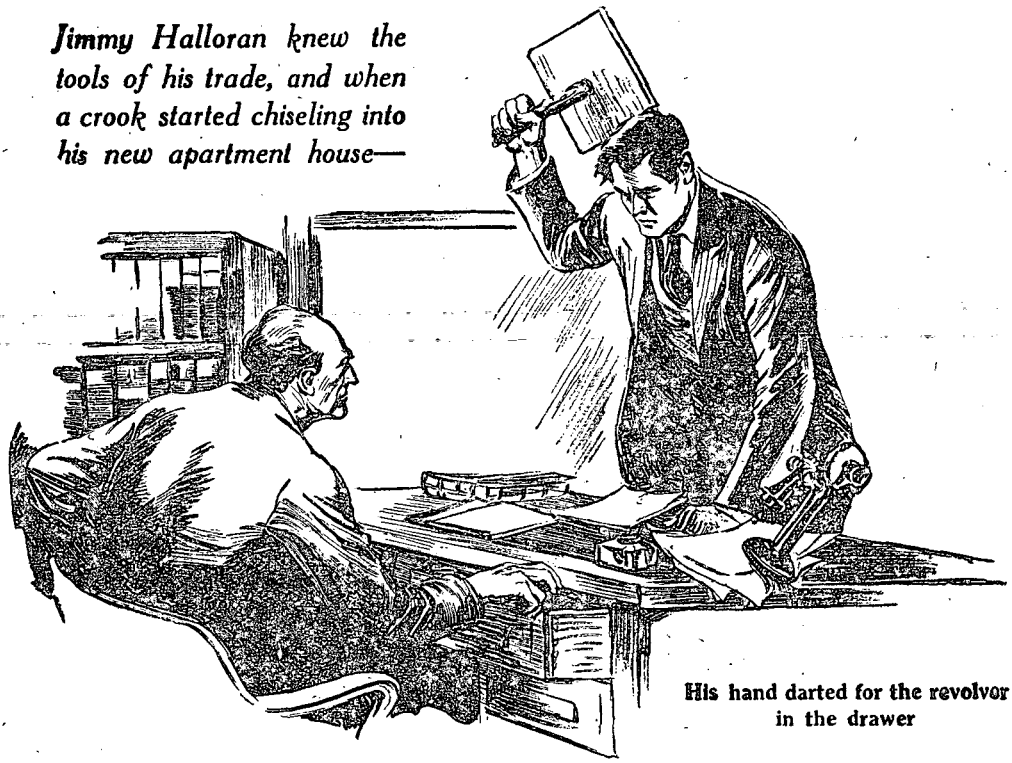
Shakespeare Was Right

By WILL McMORROW

Jimmy Halloran knew the tools of his trade, and when a crook started chiseling into his new apartment house—



His hand darted for the revolver in the drawer

JIMMY HALLORAN leaned back in his battered chair and gazed comfortably out the window of the tiny construction office at the site of the six-story apartment house, now nearing completion.

Above his head the lathers, their mouths crammed with nails, were filling the house with the tapping of a thousand woodpeckers as they tacked their narrow strips in place—at a dollar a bundle. A gang laying a new sidewalk in front of the house swung their shovels and discussed Italia Irridenta. Plasterers, white as Hamlet's ghost, but muscle-bound in shoulders and arms, drifted in and out of the scaffolded doorway. Electricians — a lightsome breed—whistled torch songs as they threaded their wires like cheerful fishermen. In the cellar, a lordly plumber, of the Brahmin caste forbidden to touch aught but metal, smoked his cigarette and waited, at a goodly price per hour, for a mason to appear and weld two bricks together.

"Shakespeare," said Jimmy Halloran, "was right. He knew the building business."

He was at peace with all the world. And properly so. It isn't everybody who can start as a bricklayer, be wiped out by the depression, and, at thirty-five, stage a come-back, however mod-

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est. Jimmy Halloran called it "the breaks," meaning luck. Then again, it might have been due to personal honesty, hard work and what is called "nerve," meaning something else again.

Miss Lindstrom, Jimmy Halloran's office mate, smiled into her typewriter. "Barnum also was right," she remarked. "Those letters are ready to sign now." Six months as Jimmy Halloran's secretary, bookkeeper, and general assistant—with occasional bullying for his own good—had taught her that he was one of those rare employers with whom a girl can joke without having to snub him afterwards. A pretty and efficient person, Miss Lindstrom, who dressed her blond hair severely, cultivated a cynical attitude at twenty-two, and wouldn't let herself go feminine during working hours.

Jimmy Halloran grinned. "Sez you! I been attending lectures, an' last night I heard a guy explaining Shakespeare."

"Why Shakespeare?"

His brick-red face deepened a shade. "A guy can improve himself, can't he? This bright lad was explaining a place in Shakespeare that says some dumbbell didn't know a hawk from a handsaw. But the lecturer says it was all a mistake by the printer; that old Shakes didn't mean a hand-saw at all, but a henshaw—a kind of a bird like a hawk."

"And—?"

"Well, the guy that was lecturin' was all wet. When Shakespeare said a hawk, he didn't mean a bird at all. He was talkin' about a plasterer's hawk—one of these contraptions that they carry on their wrist to mix plaster in."

Jimmy picked up a square of metal a few inches across, with a short handle of wood on the under side.

"Like this one that's been layin' around since the job started. Seein' it reminded me. Old Shakes knew his stuff, an' I got a lot more respect for the boloney since—"

"Coming back to the building business," Miss Lindstrom interrupted, "Mr. Lawson was in to see you this morning."

"Yeah?" Jimmy Halloran's good nature vanished into a scowl. "What did he want?"

"He didn't say. He's coming back."

HALLORAN looked toward the milk-white mixing vats and the piles of material on the street—a scant foot beyond the legal limit, at a cost of five dollars to the patrolman on the beat. Lawson, who owned the adjoining plot, would be just the baby to make trouble over that.

Ever since Lawson had tried to sell Halloran that plot of land at a ridiculous price, and had failed, there had been no love lost between the builder and his neighbor.

"I blame that guy for the two tickets I got last week, account of my night lanterns bein' out, an' for not wettin' down the rubbish dust. He's been tryin' his best to trip me up, ever since I wouldn't let him horn in on this job. An' the bank people themselves told me to lay offen him."

Miss Lindstrom nodded. "He hasn't a very hot reputation around here. He was a broker until they took away his license. But he seems to be in with the inspectors. He was using a steel measuring tape out there this morning."

A shadow darkened the doorway. Halloran looked up into the pallid smile of his neighbor.

"What do you want, Lawson?"

"Just dropped in for a chat." The broker's normal voice was a low-pitched monotone—the voice of a man cautious

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of eavesdroppers—his perpetual half-smile the meaningless, placating gesture of a man who constantly treads dangerous ground.

He confronted the red-faced Halloran as an alley cat might confront a bull dog — watchful but unafraid. "Hope the job is going well, Mr. Halloran? Almost finished I see. Putting on the white coat. Excellent! Nice job of brick-work, too."

"Think so?" Halloran frowned over a blueprint.

"Heard you had a buyer ready to take it over. Congratulations."

Halloran said nothing. He had a buyer all set when the job was finished, but he wasn't telling Lawson that. Halloran had the profit—a hard-earned one—figured to a cent; and he had a plot in mind for the next, and bigger, job.

"You're not interested in my plot, by any chance?" Lawson asked mildly.

"No," Halloran said bluntly.

"But you really must purchase part of it," Lawson insisted.

"Fat chance! After the rig-up you tried to slip me!"

"As a matter of fact," the broker purred, "you have bought a part of it. All that remains is to settle on the price. I won't be unreasonable—"

"Hey! Where do you get off to tell me—"

"Easy, now!" The broker held up a restraining hand. "Don't get excited. These mistakes will happen. I've been hoping all along I was wrong, but I'm afraid— Would you mind stepping outside with me?"

"Any old time!" Halloran arose.

BUT if he hoped for active warfare, he was disappointed. The broker led the way toward the eastern end of the building, where the gable-wall abutted on his empty lot.

"How wide a building did your plans call for, Halloran?"

"Fifty feet," the builder snorted. "What about it?"

"And how wide is your building lot supposed to be?" Lawson's voice was still low-pitched, almost confidential. "Fifty feet, is it not? Let us be perfectly frank with one another now—"

"Of course it's fifty feet! What are you drivin' at?"

Lawson shook his head. "Only this. I'm afraid, if you'll put a tape on it, you'll find that you've built fifty feet, four inches. Part of this wall is on my plot."

"That's a hot one!" Halloran beckoned to his foreman brick-layer. "Look, Harry, you ran the transit when you got your lines for this wall. This gent says you're four inches out."

The foreman's Irish jaw squared. "Tellin' me I can't lay out a wall? Where does he get that? Maybe they's an inch or so inside—you gotta expect some leeway in wall thickness, an' you know, Jimmy, this ain't no steel-skeleton job—But as far as the outside lines go, does he think I can't read bench marks an' monuments? That's where I got my dope. Take a bearin' on that." He pointed to the tiny, crayon-tinted cross, chiseled into the curb-stone. "Let this boloney measure from that."

"I did," Lawson smirked. "You're still four inches out. Somebody made a mistake. You're over on my land, Halloran."

"Surveyors," Jimmy Halloran repressed a chilling doubt, "don't make mistakes like that. I'll bet on Dick Woodford. He's been layin' out my jobs since they found Moses in the bulrushes. You go fetch him, Harry. I seen him a while back, lookin' through his spy-glass over on the Boule-

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vard . . . Another thing," he turned back to the placid Lawson, "if you're havin' a hop-dream, you'll pay his bill."

The broker glanced up meditatively at the six stories of brick and mortar. "It'd be too bad if I'm right, Halloran, wouldn't it?"

Jimmy Halloran was in his office half an hour later, telling the story to Miss Lindstrom—she was always a patient listener—when the surveyor showed up. Halloran could see the answer in Woodford's dismal bearing.

"I don't know how it came about, Jimmy! I never made a bull like that before. I just ran around the job now. Everything checks but that particular mark your foreman used. It's over on that fellow's land four inches. It must have been that young lad I had working for me. If your foreman had used any other monument—"

"He didn't," Halloran pointed out. "Spilt milk."

"If it's going to cost you money," Woodford blurted, "I'll dig up what I can. It was my mistake."

Halloran considered the background that he knew was Woodford's. A wife and a growing family on a hand-to-mouth income. And a man can't go to law with a friend he's known ever since brick-laying days.

"Hell, Dick! I don't want your kids' milk an' gruel. Lemme handle this. I'll straighten it out with that pasty-faced son of a brickbat."

LATER in the day, he visited Lawson's office.

"You realize," Lawson murmured, "that I can't afford to lose even that small fraction of land? Property is increasing in value—"

"Mistakes will happen," Halloran said, with a transparent attempt at ease. "No hard feelings, I hope. I'm four inches over on your property. Where do we go from here?"

"Of course, there's no hard feelings." Lawson looked shocked. "A mere matter of business. Of course, I could compel you to tear down that wall and rebuild it on your own property. That would be costly, Halloran."

Jimmy figured it roughly for himself.—Cut out four inches of brickwork for six stories and a cellar. Rebuild it all again. Plastering to be removed and replaced; plumbing, electrical wiring to be shifted, a shoring job to make the house safe during the meantime.

He didn't go any further than that. "Or what?" he suggested, feebly.

"Or, you can buy the narrow strip you encroach upon.—I'll sell."

"Now," the builder grunted, "you're talking. How much?"

"It will cost you," Lawson's smile was frozen in place, "eight thousand dollars, Halloran."

"Eight thou—?" Halloran relapsed again into his seat. "For a minute I thought you meant it. Quit kiddin'."

"I do mean it. It's my land, and I can set my own price. The profit on your sale will be slightly larger than that amount."

"Why, look here! Your price for the whole fifty feet was only thirty thousand—six hundred a foot! Now you're askin' two thousand an inch, just because somebody made a mistake—"

"Sorry," Lawson shrugged defensively. "I don't want to take advantage of your misfortune, but one man's meat is another man's poison. You don't have to buy, of course. In that case, I shall probably get out an injunction and compel you to tear down—"

"You crummy, crawlin', crooked—!"

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"Names won't help, Halloran. Let us discuss this calmly. I happen to know all about your deal. You'll have two thousand profit left even so. I will prepare a deed to you of that strip. Come and see me tomorrow, when you've cooled off. I'll take three thousand cash, and a note for the remainder. At six per cent, of course.—No, don't get violent, Halloran. I collect rents, you know, and I have a permit to carry a pistol.—Go quietly, now!"

Jimmy Halloran slammed out.

BACK in his office he phoned his attorney, who proved to be Job's comforter.

"Of course, it's a plain hold-up, Mr. Halloran, and you can carry it to court and tie things up for months; but after all, no matter how it got there, your house is on his land, and I'd advise you to settle with him. Let me know."

Halloran clumsily replaced the receiver on the hook and went to stand in the doorway, his gloomy gaze on the six stories of brand-new construction. The house was silent now, for the activities of the day were over.

A year's work—fighting to get a loan from the bank, wrangling with contractors, cutting costs to the bone, working twelve hours a day, battling inch by inch to make good. The two thousand dollars he would have left would just about clean up the extra bills, and he'd have to start at the bottom again.

Behind him, Miss Lindstrom punched vigorously at the typewriter keys. There was a suspicious redness about her blue eyes. Even so detached and efficient a person as she, who cultivated a youthful cynicism, might have an occasional dream of romance.

But Jimmy Halloran didn't notice.

"Better go to the bank first thing in the morning," he said heavily, "an' certify a check for three thousand. If I fight this guy, I'll owe more than I can pay."

"I think it's a rotten shame!" Slim fingers pounded fiercely. "He's robbed you of everything!"

"It's the breaks—when you deal with a blood sucker like that. I can blacken both his eyes, but that won't get me nowhere."

He kicked the broken plasterer's hawk out of his path. "Smart guy!—Quotin' Shakespeare! I guess—I guess I been outa my class. My old man laid brick, an' so did I. But I thought I could do better. Me for the wall again—"

"Nonsense!" she interrupted hotly. "You know very well you don't mean a word of that! You have more to you than a dozen filthy little worms like that Lawson. You're just feeling punk.—Now you go right home and pour yourself a highball. I'm going to stay and finish my work."

JIMMY HALLORAN was a half-hour late for his appointment with Lawson, and he looked like a man who had spent a sleepless night—as he had. In spite of that, he seemed to be striving to make the best of a bad bargain, as is the nature of men who are not given to whining.

"I'm late," he said, "account of having to do some telephoning. But better late than never."

"Glad to see you take this from a sensible, business angle, Halloran," the broker confided in his subdued tones. "All in a life-time—"

"This," said Halloran, indicating his companion, "is my lawyer. I won't ask him to shake hands with you, him bein' a sort of a nice young feller."

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The remark left Lawson unperturbed. "Of course, when I set the price yesterday I didn't include the costs. A mere matter of two hundred dollars. Transfer tax, drawing papers and so forth. Surely, you don't expect me to pay that?"

Jimmy Halloran, blinking rapidly, cut off his attorney's protest. "Okay, Lawson. All your way. Ever read that guy Shakespeare?"

Lawson was watchfully silent.

"Because," Halloran continued, "you remind me of a lad I been hearin' about. A big-hearted slob named Sherlock that ran a drygoods store or somethin' in Venice." He shoved his check and a note for five thousand dollars across the desk. "There's your price. Now, let's see that deed."

"That little matter of two hundred—"

"Sure," Halloran produced a checkbook and a fountain pen, went to work with slow-moving fingers—Miss Lindstrom usually did these little tasks—while the attorney glanced over the deed.

"All in order—signed and witnessed." The lawyer folded up the paper. "Pretty expensive piece of property, Mr. Halloran. At that rate, the fifty-foot plot would run well over a million dollars."

"A hijackin'," Jimmy jerked his square thumb at Lawson. "He ain't denying it. Every one for himself. Better shoot down town an' put that deed on record. I wouldn't trust this guy further than I could shove the Empire State with my foot."

He looked grimly at Lawson. "Now that deal is closed. I got your four inches of land, and you got my shirt, cuffs an' collar attached. But we ain't finished!"

The broker's quick eyes darted to an open drawer of his desk. "Now, Halloran, if you're contemplating any rough stuff I warn you—"

"Hell, no!" The builder opened a package he had brought with him—a square, flat bundle hastily wrapped. "Know what this is, Lawson?"

"I don't. And I'm going to be busy now, Halloran, so please—"

"THAT," said Halloran placing the object on the desk, "is a plasterer's hawk. It's been layin' around my dump for months. Some one throwed it away, account of it bein' busted. I never thought it was worth much—like that four-inch strip of yourn—but suddenly it gets valuable. I'm gonna sell you that hawk, Lawson, business bein' what it is, for the miserable sum of eight thousand, two hundred dollars."

"Really?" Lawson looked amusedly at the spattered implement. "You're funny, Halloran."

"Wait till I explain. Maybe you'll think it's cheap at the price. I got a smart girl down in my office, Lawson, an' she done some snoopin' around, after I left last night. What we all missed she seen—because she was lookin' for it.—That surveyor's mark was wrong."

"So I understand," the broker's smile widened.

"What I mean," Halloran went on slowly, "is that that wasn't the mark left by the surveyor. Somebody—three guesses who—shifted that mark by knockin' off a section of curb where the original mark was, and cementing back a chunk of stone to fit. The cement was special dark, so as not to show easy. Then he—you only got two guesses now—chiseled a new mark, four inches off."

"You're having a brainstorm, Hal-

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loran," the broker said harshly. "Hard luck has knocked you silly. Why shouldn't the City repair a curb?"

"Only they didn't. Miss Lindstrom just phoned the Bureau of Highways. No record of a repair there. It was done before the brickwork on my house started.—You're quite a chiseler, Lawson, but you chiseled the wrong block that time."

"Accusing me? You'll find yourself in a libel suit, my dumb friend. Now you claim that I changed that curb in order to make you encroach on my land, so that I could hold you up for a trimming. If I were you, I wouldn't say things like that, Halloran. You might be asked to prove it in court."

"I can."

"How?"

"'By this." Halloran held up the hawk for inspection. "That special dark cement was mixed on this. See where it sticks to the top? I didn't use that shade of mixture on my job."

"Fine!" the broker smiled again in relief. "Because you find a patched curbstone, and the tool used to mix the cement, you build a case against me. Better consult a lawyer again."

"When the time comes! There's a lot you don't know about the building business, old-timer. For instance, toolhandles is usually burned in with the initials of the contractor. This has the letters A. P.—Know that guy, Lawson?"

The broker shook his head.

"Well, I do!" Halloran rasped. "It's Anthony Perotti, the plasterer. I just called him up.—Keep your claws offen them checks!—You should 'a' got a regular stone-mason for the job, an' it would have been neater. Perotti gave me all the dope an hour ago—after my girl matched up this cement with the patch—an' right now I got the lad down in my office that Perotti hired out to you one evening to fix a chunk of curb you said got busted by a steam shovel."

JIMMY HALLORAN leaned back in his battered office chair and listened to the tapping of the lathers overhead, the rumble of bricks in the cellar-chute, the faint bellows of a lordly plumber who had discovered a mere wood-worker desecrating the sacred metal.

Halloran's chin was skinned, but so were the knuckles of his right hand, and he was at peace with the world. In the wire basket on the desk was a torn note for five thousand dollars, and in his pocket was a recorded deed for four inches of land.

"Shakespeare," he said, "was a great guy! I was listening the other night to a guy recitin' something about a high-tide. When you miss it, you're full of shallow miseries for the rest of your life."

Miss Lindstrom smiled into her typewriter. Her blond hair, no longer repressed, rippled in tiny waves.

"Say." Jimmy Halloran leaned toward her. "I'm goin' to take in a play by the old geezer to-night. Want to come along?"

"That—depends." She made a fragile attempt at flippancy. "I prefer Barnyard Shaw's sex-dramas.—What is it you're going to see—'The Taming of the Shrew'?"

"No. This ain't no animal act." His big hand, covering hers and most of the typewriter keys as well, seemed to create some confusion. "It's about a couple of Greeks. But they say it's a swell show. It's called 'Romeo And Juliet.'"

THE END.

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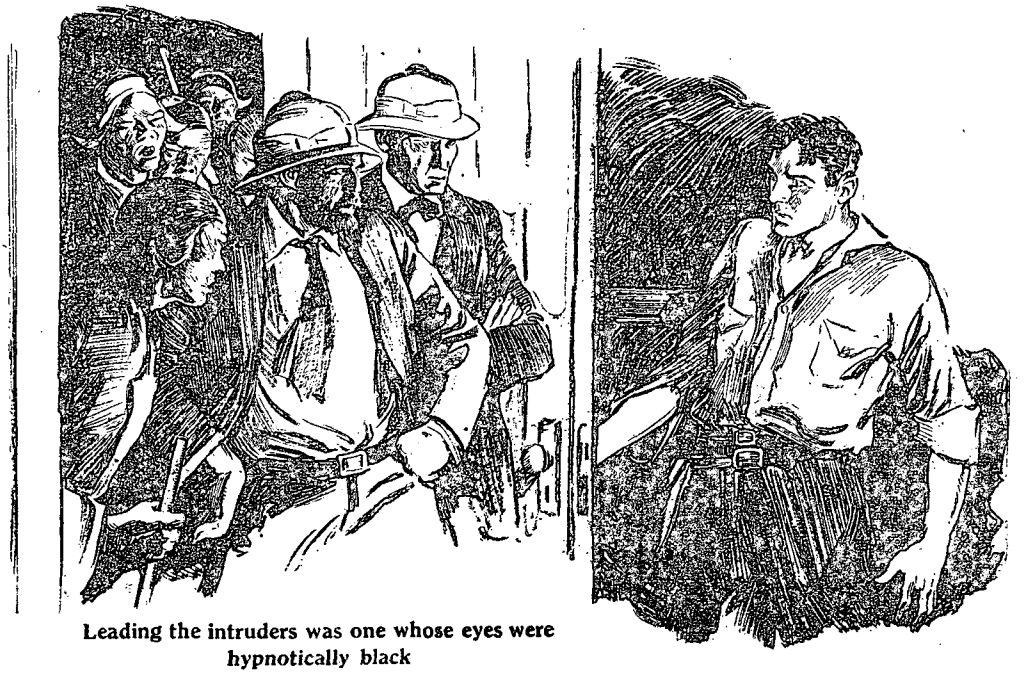
Sting of the Blue Scorpion

By LORING BRENT

Author of "Cave of the Blue Scorpion," "Outlaw's Holiday," etc.

Peter the Brazen was in a trap—caught between the threats of the Scorpion, most powerful man in China, and the demands of a Napoleonic madman



Leading the intruders was one whose eyes were hypnotically black

THE CHARACTERS:

PETER MOORE, a young American engineer, better known as PETER THE BRAZEN. At present he is supervising the construction of an elaborate hydro-electric system in the Shan Mountains, financed by the immensely wealthy Dr. Hang Win, eighty-year-old owner of the Ling Po Mining Company. Peter has had his troubles on this job, but he is at last almost ready to open one of the most important units in the power system.

LEE GOW, who, like all of Peter's other assistants and all of his labor, is a Chinese. Gow is a highly educated Chinese, and is Peter's first assistant, an absolutely dependable man. Both he and his wife have been Peter's warm and loyal friends.

SUSAN O'GILVIE, wealthy and beautiful young American woman—only her wealth stands between her marriage to Peter, for Peter is proud. Mysteriously kidnaped in Shanghai, she turns up, half starved, in the ragged disguise of a coolie. She is not certain of the identity of her abductors; all she knows is

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that one of them was a sinister one-eyed Chinese.

BILL MONTGOMERY, a passionately devoted admirer of Susan's. He is good looking (an ex-actor), and he has money, inherited from his father's Montana cattle ranch. But Susan feels only annoyance at his insistent attentions.

"MR. LU," a fabulous, almost mythological Chinese of great power. Susan and Peter had once been his captives. They had seen his unbelievable secret palace under the Lake of the Flying Dragon, but through some quixotic impulse he had freed them, exacting from them a promise that they would never tell what they had seen. Susan, however, in a half hysterical moment, had repeated something of all this; and she now supposes that it is the Blue Scorpion who has attempted to kidnap her for the purpose of inflicting some terrible punishment.

DR. LUIGI STRANG, a brain specialist who has left America under suspicion of malpractice. The truth is that he himself is not quite sane. He delights in performing certain delicate operations upon the brains of his patients, whereby they become his slaves, giving him their money, thereafter unable to disobey his slightest wish. Dr. Strang is now possessed by a desire to know the secrets of Mr. Lu. He knows that it may be possible to do this through Susan O'Gilvie and Peter Moore, and by means of his strange hypnotic abilities he has, in fact, succeeded in wringing from Susan a portion of the truth.

KAREN STRANG, the extravagant wife of the doctor. Herself infatuated with Bill Montgomery, she is jealous of the attention he pays to Susan.

PROFESSOR AVERY VAN ZANT, a man upon whom Strang has performed his evil brain operation. He is now little better than the doctor's tool—has no will of his own.

CHAPTER X (*Continued*).

RAGGED COOLIE.

PETER, wondering, set about getting her something to eat. His Chinese servant was doing sentinel duty on the dam to-night; had gone on watch immediately after serving Moore's supper. He rummaged about the shelves, finding cans of tomatoes, sardines, soup, beans and a tin of freshly opened biscuits. He opened cans, and placed them on the stove to heat. He made coffee.

He discovered presently that the heat was waking Susan up. Her eyes, under their long black lashes, were lazily watching him.

Moore walked over and looked down at her. She smiled. There was warm color in her face now. She wriggled about under the blankets and gazed up at him starily. He knew that look. It confirmed his apprehensions. Susan was contrite. That meant that Susan, at the opportune moment, was going to explain in exciting detail that it really wasn't her fault, but that she had been the victim of irresistible circumstances.

"You little devil!" he growled.

Susan sat up with the urgency of a Jack-in-the-box.

"Darling," she wailed, "if you'll just listen—"

"Wait till after you've eaten."

She meekly nodded. "It's a harrowing story," she said.

"It always is," the man said dryly.

"The most horrible man—" she began again.

"Eat first," he stopped her. "Talk afterward."

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"Yes, Peter.—Isn't this place cozy? It's just like a box car, isn't it? Only it isn't on wheels. You're just a Spartan, aren't you?—What am I eating? I'm starved, darling!"

He placed steaming soup before her on a table which his Chinese boy had fashioned with loving care from a packing case. Susan devoured all the soup, all the tomatoes, all the sardines, all the biscuits, and most of a can of warmed-up corned beef. It was, she said, the first civilized food she had tasted in almost two months—since leaving Shanghai. She had been living on coolie rice and river fish and boiled weeds. It had been simply too hideous.

"I'll never look another grain of rice in the eye without shuddering."

If she hadn't had courage, she might have eaten slowly, to postpone the hour of reckoning. But Susan never lacked courage. She could have got along with a great deal less courage.

Peter, watching her, was torn between an almost overwhelming pity and mirth. She ate so ravenously. She was so pathetically thin. And she looked so jaunty, so debonair, perched there on the edge of the bunk, in the torn and tattered garments of a river coolie.

But her violet eyes were bright and her cheeks were pink from the heat and the excitement of seeing him again. He often disapproved of Susan's trouble-hunting nature, but he knew he could not have tolerated a life in which there was no Susan.

When she had finished the coffee and smoked a cigarette, she said, "Now, come over here and sit beside me, because if you don't sit here and hold my hand, I'm afraid I won't have the strength to tell you about it."

He moved the table back and seated himself beside her.

Looking up at him with glowing, excited eyes, she said, "I'm so glad to see you again that I could positively bawl.—You haven't kissed me! That one down the hill didn't count. I was too numb."

He kissed her. Susan's face was feverish. She said her stomach was apt to give her a temperature from the sheer excitement of receiving so much food all at once.

"IT'S been perfectly hideous," she said. "It's been like a nightmare. I was kidnaped in Shanghai. I escaped when they tried to tie my hands and feet and throw me into a sampan. I stowed away on a fishing junk that was going up-river under sail. An old woman found me hiding in the stern and stole all my clothes and gave me these in return. I was dead broke. I had to beg my way. I slept in abandoned rice mills, in fields. I must have walked hundreds of miles, and I never stirred except at night. My feet are so calloused I could walk on spikes and not feel it! . . .

"It was raining almost all the time. I caught a horrible cold near Cheman-Foo, and was so sick I thought I'd die. I learned to beg from young women, not the old ones. The old ones were always mean. One of them threw a stone at me. I memorized the names of all the people I could who were kind to me. To-morrow, before I forget them, I must write them down, so I can send them presents. Even now, Peter, it doesn't seem possible that it could have been I who went through such ghastly experiences . . .

"But I had to reach you. I didn't dare go to consuls—I didn't dare go near civilized places for fear they'd be watching for me and get me again."

"Let's begin a little nearer the be-

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ginning," Peter suggested. "Who kidnaped you?"

"I haven't the faintest idea!"

Peter's hopes were fading. He said, "Reassure me on just one point, Susan. Tell me you haven't mentioned our visit to Mr. Lu to any one!"

"But I did, darling!" she wailed. "It was positively bullied out of me!"

Peter looked at her eyes with a feeling that was, curiously, merely one of disappointment. There was only one word for this—betrayal. Susan's thirst for excitement had drawn him into many dangerous predicaments. But this time she had betrayed him; for he had exacted the most solemn promise from her, when they parted, that she would mention that fantastic visit to no one.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DISAPPEARANCE.

PETER folded his arms on his chest and said quietly, "I understand."

Susan, sensing his attitude, cried, "Darling! You know I wouldn't do such a thing deliberately! I tell you I was bullied. A man named Dr. Strang bullied the secret of the Blue Scorpion out of me. At dinner, on my last night in Shanghai. I was having dinner with him and his wife and another American—a Bill Montgomery—in the doctor's suite, and he began to abuse you. He said the most outrageous things about you. He made me so furious I could have murdered him. He said you were—"

"It doesn't matter," Peter stopped her. "Is this man's full name Luigi Strang?"

"Yes!" Susan cried. "Do you know him?"

Peter said quietly, "That explains everything. Do you know just who Dr. Luigi Strang is?"

"He had a sanitarium for what he called 'brain cases,' just outside San Bernardino, California. He's on his honeymoon—with a very blond bride. He's a horrible, shaggy monster. That's all I know.—I could kill him!" Susan panted. "What do you know about him?"

"I heard sometime ago that he was headed for China," Peter answered. "He was once a famous brain surgeon—one of the greatest brain surgeons in the world. Then his own brain went wrong. He opened that California sanitarium and filled it with mental cases. He operated on the brains of these patients—I don't know how many, but a great many. He would cut out a small lobe, or an area, which made his victims, in some strange way, completely enslaved to him. What caused the authorities to investigate him was the fact that his patients invariably willed him every dollar they had. It was nothing but a horrible, cold-blooded racket. Now, tell me just what happened."

Susan told him, graphically and in detail, of the events of that evening, beginning with the cocktail party at the French Consulate, and did not slight her terrifying experiences in Chinese City. Peter asked her numerous questions. Where had she met Bill Montgomery? Where had she met the Strangs? Who had introduced them to her? Who had Mrs. Strang been before she married Dr. Strang? What had Dr. Strang given Susan to drink before that dinner? On one point he was particularly interested—the one-eyed spider-like coolie who wore wooden sandals.

"Are you quite sure he was the same

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one who followed you in Chinese City, and who headed the gang of kidnapers?"

Susan was positive. What puzzled Peter was the one-eyed coolie's apparent knowledge that Susan would leave the hotel hurriedly and would go down to the landing stages some time that evening.

"He was waiting there for you. How did he know you would be down there? I mean, who tipped him off? I think he is one of Mr. Lu's men, but could it be that Dr. Strang is one of Mr. Lu's men? Did Mr. Lu have Dr. Strang force you to make that admission as a test?—Yet that doesn't sound like the Blue Scorpion.—And just where does this Mongomery lad fit in?"

SUSAN was sure that Bill Montgomery was perfectly innocent. Peter wasn't sure that any one in any way connected with the business was above suspicion.

"Bill Montgomery's nothing but a handsome, hopeless romantic," Susan murmured.

"Hopelessly in love with you," said Peter.

"Jealous?"

"Not unless you're in love with him," Peter said. "Are you?"

"The trouble with me," Susan said, "is that I can't see any other man in the world but you.—I'm hopeless."

"And the trouble with me," Peter said, "is that I'm in love with a girl who is worth umpteen-billion dollars—and my pride simply burns me up."

"False pride!"

"Oh, sure.—But I'll make my million yet."

"Ah, yes!" Susan said airily. "Won't we have the dandiest times going about the world in our wheel chairs?"

He didn't like that. "I may surprise you.—This deal, if somebody doesn't throw a monkey wrench into it, will give me a good running start." He sighed. "Susan, I never realized how much a million dollars was."

Any reference to Susan's wealth and Peter's poverty always infuriated Susan. And her happiness at seeing him again was too great to permit fury to spoil it. She asked him about the job, and he discussed it enthusiastically and in detail, neglecting to mention the mysterious troubles he'd been having.

"You'll be here," he said, "when we turn the power on—a week from today. That's what the contract calls for. In fact, I'll let you turn the power on. I'll arrange now for a place for you to bunk. You can double with the wife of my maintenance man. She's a charming, very modern young Chinese woman. You'll like Mrs. Lee Gow. She's a great cook, and neater than pins. Her husband can bunk up here with me. Mrs. Lee will fix you up with clothes. She's about your size. And for a while you'll do nothing but eat and sleep."

Susan was looking at him broodingly. "You don't seem to be expecting trouble from Mr. Lu."

Peter said quickly, "Oh, no. We'll be back in Shanghai too soon for that."

He was, of course, lying to prevent her from worrying. He knew that there was no way to escape trouble with Mr. Lu. It was useless, trying to escape to the coast now. Whatever Mr. Lu wished to do, to repay them for betraying his trust, he would do. They were completely at his mercy.

What form would Mr. Lu's vengeance take? Some fantastic, horrible punishment? Peter Moore had heard of the punishment which the Blue Scorpion meted out to one pair of lovers.

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The man had been buried alive, so that only his head was above ground. And the girl had been horribly tortured to death before her fiancé's eyes. He was left there—with her body, broken and torn, lying a few feet from his eyes—until he died of thirst and starvation.

But Susan knew nothing of such legends.

SUSAN liked Mrs. Lee Gow tremendously, and was infatuated with the Lees' three-months-old daughter, who resembled nothing in the world but a bright-eyed laughing Chinese doll. Mrs. Lee supplied Susan with Chinese clothing from her own wardrobe, and undertook to nurse her back to health. Susan wasn't actually ill, but undernourishment and hardships had weakened her. Under Mrs. Lee's care, Susan immediately began to recover her weight and her appearance. Her cheeks lost their hollows and regained their color. Her body quickly lost its pathetic thinness. Before the week drew to an end, it seemed to Peter that she was as lovely and as energetic as she had ever been.

The trouble was that after a very few days Susan was too vigorous to do nothing but eat and rest. She began to explore the power house, the buss-yard. And soon the great concrete wall of the dam was tempting her. She wanted to climb to the top and see the lake, wanted to look down inside the penstock and see the eighty-ton steel gate which Peter had installed there. It would serve in case of emergency, to protect the turbines and the wicket gates which were so cleverly built into the turbine housings.

Late one afternoon, with a small automatic pistol in a holster at her waist, she made the climb up the zig-zag rock path to the top of the dam.

Peter, in the buss-yard, saw her slim, erect figure silhouetted against the late afternoon sky as she walked along the dam and the lip of the spillway. Watching her, he smiled. She was so valiant, so damned inquisitive, so jaunty. There was no one in the world, he reflected, quite like Susan!

PERHAPS it was half an hour later that he heard what might have been the faint echo of the riveting machine across the yard. But the riveting machine had been silent for several minutes. Again, faint, but clear and sharp, he heard the staccato rattling. In all, there were six distinct detonations. Then he recalled that there were just six bullets in the pistol which he had insisted that Susan carry.

He ran, climbed and clawed his way up the path to the top of the dam. He looked frantically about. The lake was calm and innocently blue. The hills were glamorously blue and purple in the misty dusk.

There was no sign of Susan. He ran across the dam to the other side. There he found three dead men—bronzed and powerful hillmen they had been in life. These three Susan had evidently accounted for. Peter suddenly sat down on a rock, with a sickening, overwhelming sense of defeat. There was no question in his mind that Mr. Lu had struck. His men had been waiting, perhaps days, for this very opportunity. Unquestionably, too, strong, fresh, fast horses had been held in waiting. They rode like the wind, these hillmen. Pursuit was out of the question.

Where, Peter wondered, was the Chinese sentry? Day and night, he had kept a man guarding the dam.

He found the body of the sentry a hundred feet away, near the edge of

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the lake, tumbled down into a pile of bowlders. His throat had been slit.

Sick and weary, Peter returned to his shack. There was nothing for him to do but go to the Lake of the Flying Dragon. It would be impossible to save Susan from whatever fate Mr. Lu had in store for her, he knew, but he could not abandon her to that fate.

He could not leave, however, until he had pulled himself together. He would have Mrs. Lee Gow make him some strong coffee, then he would saddle a horse and start.

Heavy footfalls sounded in the path as he started for the door. Through the little window, he glimpsed a man plunging up the path—a tall young man, hatless, with curly black hair and a darkly flushed, handsome face.

That glimpse was sufficient to apprise Peter Moore that his urgent visitor must surely be the handsome young American cattle prince whom Susan had known in Shanghai. There was a black revolver in Bill Montgomery's right hand.

CHAPTER XII.

VISITORS.

THE American cattle prince charged the door of Peter's shack and kicked it open. He entered the shack with all the power, all the ferocity of a charging tiger. His rush carried him half across the room.

It took his eyes some moments to grow used to the darkness inside the shack. Then, with the revolver at his hip, he bore down on the dim, slender figure beside the window.

Bill Montgomery was panting from an excess of emotion and energetic determination. He reminded Peter of some mythical young god of vengeance.

"You dirty fortune hunter!" he panted. "Where is she?"

"Put that gun away!"

"Damn you!—I'll blow your brains out if you don't tell me where that girl is! She's here!—I know she's here!"

Peter, regarding him, would have been amused, had it not been for the feeling of tragic futility which had overcome him since Susan's disappearance. Susan had told him how Bill Montgomery dramatized his every emotion. There was no question that he saw himself now as the American hero rescuing the girl he loved from the hands of a black-hearted villain.

The black-hearted villain, who was Peter Moore, said: "Bill, you're just one hour too late. Miss O'Gilvie has just been kidnaped."

"Hah!" Bill said, sneering. "Do you expect me to believe that? I'm here to get her, and I'm going to get her! Tell me where she is, or, by God, I'll drill you!"

Peter walked slowly toward him, with arms folded on chest. It was a trick, often useful with such impulsive and inexperienced young men as Bill Montgomery.

The cattle prince raised the muzzle of the weapon with the obvious intention of pulling the trigger. One second later, he was unarmed, and the revolver was a dark glitter, flying toward a corner of the shack.

"Now," Peter began quietly, "if you'll let me explain—"

A large brown fist, landing fair and square on his left cheekbone, ended that peaceable suggestion. It was evident that the cattle prince had a few surprises of his own.

As Peter staggered back against the wall, almost out on his feet, the belligerent young man from Montana panted, "I'm going to teach you a les-

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son that you'll never forget! I'm going to beat you to a pulp. Oh, I've heard all about you—you dirty, lying, four-flushing, cheap crook!"

While Peter Moore, backed against the wall, was recovering from the jarring effects of that punch, the man from Montana embroidered his theme. He had grown up with cowboys and he had a splendid vocabulary.

Peter learned, roughly, that he was low enough to steal the pennies from a dead man's eyes; that he was nothing but a cheap bum, a bluff, a braggart, a beach comber. He made no attempt to justify himself. When the fury of this human volcano had run its course, he would explain. He did not altogether blame Bill Montgomery for this savage attitude. Bill didn't understand, that was all. In due course Peter would make everything clear.

But it was destined not to be so simple as that. Fairly in mid breath, the cattle prince followed up one of the unkindest of his denunciations with his large and expert fists.

Peter's fists, while not so large, were fairly expert, too. Often he had been compelled to rely on their skill and readiness in unavoidable brawls, from Rangoon to Mukden. Peter's nature was peaceful. He disliked fighting. But he knew how.

IN the gathering dusk, the fight began. It should have been very one-sided, because the man from Montana was almost a head taller than Peter; his power was ox-like, and obviously he had been scientifically trained in the use of his fists. But it wasn't as one-sided as it should have been, for Peter was faster.

The gloom of falling night was in his favor; it made him a phantom. In the first flurry of blows he came off unscratched, but sent a savage punch to Bill's jaw which sent the man from Montana staggering out of the door and several feet down the path.

With silent fury, the avenger returned. Peter sidestepped his rush, and Bill Montgomery, unable to check his own attack, smashed into the cold stove and sent it rolling and banging into a corner. He returned. Peter slipped away from him again; jumped back and dealt the man from Montana another savage punch in the jaw.

That one set Bill off balance. He fell against the improvised shelves of provisions. Frantically he tried to maintain his balance, clawed at the shelves and brought them down about him in a tumbling débris of canned goods. Another man would have used these heavy cans as weapons. A can of corned beef is a missile not to be scorned. But Bill was a clean fighter. All the fighting he knew he had evidently learned in a ring. Possibly he had been on a college boxing team.

So, returning to the fray, he used nothing but his fists. He landed a punch in Peter's stomach. Peter fought himself into a clinch, and resisted the temptation to kick Bill Montgomery in the shins. He wanted, and would eventually have, Bill's friendship. And it mustn't be marred by a later recollection, on Bill's part, that unclean tactics had been employed.

Bill punched him cleanly out of the clinch, and followed his advantage with a swinging blow to the face, which missed. Peter's next clean punch sent Bill Montgomery crashing against the built-in bunk. He rebounded, and launched furious rights and lefts; but where Peter had been he now was not.

The fury of the Montana man was wearing him out, but he would not stop. Peter began to have a deeper and deep-

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er liking for Bill Montgomery. The cattleman had, practically, whipped himself by his own magnificent wrath; but he would not admit that he was whipped.

Peter knocked him down four times in thirty seconds. Each time, it took Bill longer to get to his feet, and he was more uncertain.

The fourth time, Peter said, "Listen, Bill. Let's cut this out. You've got me all wrong."

"I'll not quit," Bill wheezed, "until you're unconscious."

It was almost dark now—so murky that all details of the interior of the shack were lost in the purple blur. Almost sobbing, Bill threw himself again at the phantom.

Once more Peter knocked him down. He hated to do it. But there was no choice. If this fight had been conducted in a ring, even the cruelest of referees would have stopped it long ago.

Eventually, Peter stopped it by knocking Bill Montgomery completely out. The man from Montana fell—and did not rise. And when Peter spoke his name, Bill did not answer.

THEN Peter found matches, and eventually found candles among the débris on the floor. He lighted candles and lifted the unconscious warrior into the bunk.

The shack, to judge from appearances, might have been visited by a particularly ferocious twister. Not a single shelf remained on any wall; the stove was smashed; the table was in splinters; the makeshift chairs were smashed; the floor was littered with blueprints, drawing instruments, cans of provisions, tobacco, broken pipes, clothing, and fragments of wood.

Peter glanced at himself in the fragment of a mirror that he had tacked on a wall. His jaw, on the left side, was swollen and discolored, but otherwise he was clean of marks.

Unfortunately, Bill Montgomery was not in such good shape. His nose was red and swollen; it might be broken. The skin about both eyes already showed indications of discoloring. His lips were puffed.

Peter, deliberating upon what to do about Bill, decided to leave him a brief note, saying that he was sorry, but that it was true that Susan had disappeared, and that he was going in search of her. Unless he was mistaken, Bill would probably start fighting again the moment he recovered consciousness; he would not believe a word that Peter told him.

Peter was rummaging about among the litter on the floor for a pencil that was unbroken when he heard footfalls on the path. However, he paid no attention to them, thinking that Lee Gow was dropping in to inquire about Susan's prolonged absence.

A sense of utter futility flowed over him again. He had planned to send the first water through the turbines to-morrow afternoon. And he had looked forward to the pleasure it would give Susan to be the one to switch the high voltage onto the lines. He did not care now whether or not the current ever surged on those laboriously erected lines. He would say nothing to Lee Gow or any one else about his plans. He would simply go to Mr. Lu single-handed.

Some one thumped on the closed door of the shack.

Now, there are thumps and thumps. This one was of the important variety. Certainly, it was not the discreet tapping of Lee Gow or of any of the other young Chinese engineers

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or foremen. Only a white man would thump with such assurance, such arrogance.

Peter opened the door and stared in surprise at a group of faces lighted dimly orange by the candles. Two of these were white men. Ranged behind them were a dozen tall, strange Chinese. Darkly bronzed men these were, of the kind that Peter had found dead at the top of the dam. And there was no question in his mind who one of the white men was. Susan's description of the man made him easier to identify than Bill Montgomery. Black—hypnotically black — red-rimmed eyes; shaggy brown beard; wet red lips.

A deep, powerful voice said:

"I am Dr. Luigi Strang."

CHAPTER XIII.

A PROPOSITION.

PETER shifted his eyes from the face of the one-time celebrated brain surgeon to the eyes of the doctor's companion. Fascinating eyes, these. As yellow as any jungle cat's. And they were not quite human. Some quality was missing from them. Peter did not know then that this same quality of something missing was characteristic of the eyes of every man or woman upon whom Dr. Luigi Strang had performed his notorious brain operation. All Peter knew was that the doctor's companion, because of the quality which was missing in those yellow eyes, set in the slender, yellowish face, gave this man the look of a puma.

"This is my associate, Professor Van Zant. We should like to come in and have a little chat with you, Mr. Moore."

Peter, glancing at the bronzed, grim faces of the Chinese guards, said irritably, "I'm just leaving on an important errand. I haven't time for a chat."

The brain specialist smiled. "Just a moment, Moore. Perhaps I can relieve your mind of certain misapprehensions. Were you about to start on a hunt for Miss O'Gilvie?"

Peter felt a thrill of antagonism run along his muscles. He felt an instant and tremendous disliking for these two scientists. He would not have needed Susan's biased account of her dealings with Dr. Strang to have arrived at this dislike. It was the mutual hostility that is aroused when two entirely different natures meet, and by their very unlikeness strike sparks of mutual antagonism. It would have occurred under any circumstances, any conditions—instantaneous, full-fledged hatred.

When Peter, hostile and suspicious, merely stared at him, Dr. Strang said jocularly, "You need have no fears, Mr. Moore. Miss O'Gilvie is, at this moment, safe with my wife.—Where she is, of course, is a matter that I am not prepared at this moment to divulge."

Peter did not betray his relief. At that moment he felt that any fate was preferable to Susan's falling into the hands of the Blue Scorpion.

It was obvious to him that Dr. Strang and Professor Van Zant were men with an ax—perhaps more than one ax—to grind. He had suspected, when listening to Susan's excited account of her adventures, that Dr. Strang wanted, among other things, to know his, Peter's, whereabouts.—The doctor was, then, simply a man with a proposition; and he was ready to back up that proposition with his native guards and the threat of what might happen to Susan if it was not accepted.

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There was no proposition he could make that Peter could not handle with agility. Peter was absolutely sure of this. Somehow the proposition would concern Mr. Lu. Of that he was quite as certain.

Peter smiled somewhat grimly. Glancing from the yellow eyes to the black ones, he said, "So this is nothing but a social call? By all means, come in, gentlemen! I must apologize not only for the simplicity of my quarters, but for the condition they are in. I have just had another visitor—who was less subtle."

PETER, backing away, watched the shaggy face of the brain specialist as the two men cautiously came in. They seemed wary. Dr. Strang, looking quickly over the topsy-turvy scene, was the first to discover Bill Montgomery lying on the bunk.

He walked over and looked down into his face. Then he turned and said, "I knew he was coming to Chung-King by the steamer that followed ours up the river; but I didn't think he'd make such good time in from Chennan-Fou. I see that you used violence."

Peter Moore, smiling thinly, said, "I'm sorry I can't offer you chairs, gentlemen."

"This fellow," the doctor rumbled, more to himself than to Peter, "is a damned nuisance." He was referring, Peter knew, to Bill Montgomery. A faint snore from the recumbent young man indicated that he had slipped easily from unconsciousness into sleep.

"I must warn you, Mr. Moore," Dr. Strang said, "that it is useless for you to attempt violence with us. These men are armed; they are fully instructed. Besides, I want you to know that my own intentions are absolutely friendly."

"I gathered that," Peter said dryly, and found the cold yellow eyes of "the puma man" resentfully regarding him.

"Shut that door," Dr. Strang said.

Professor Van Zant shut the door, and folding his arms, stood with his back against it. "Before we go any further," he said, "I'd feel more comfortable if Moore disarmed himself."

Peter hesitated, and said, "Certainly, gentlemen. You'll find me the soul of coöperation." He tossed his revolver on the bunk at the feet of the sleeping cattle prince.

Dr. Strang briskly rubbed his hands together. He said, "Nothing is to be gained by beating about the bush. We come here, Moore, with a proposition that may strike you as amazing, even fantastic. I am sure it is the most amazing proposition that ever came your way. But before stating it, I will first tell you what your contribution must be. I want you to acompany me to Mr. Lu's palace. I know that if I go there with you, he will give me an audience."

"I guessed that was what you wanted of me," said Peter.

"Very well. You perhaps know who I am. I am the greatest brain surgeon in the world. My fame is international—world-wide.—Now, you have talked with this so-called Blue Scorpion. You know that he is a man of amazing learning. You also know that no important event transpires in the world without his hearing of it. In short, you will, of course, assume that he has heard of me." Strang hesitated.

Peter nodded. He was amazed by nothing, least of all by this madman's conceit.

Dr. Strang glared. "You grant that?"

"Oh, yes. There's no doubt about it."

"Very well. Mr. Lu, being so vastly

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erudite, would be actually as interested in meeting me as he would be in meeting such a genius as Einstein, Millikan, or Mme. Curie—any great scientific intelligence. He would grant me an audience, simply because he would be anxious to hear what I have to say."

"To say the least, doctor, he is shrewd," Peter murmured.

"Ah, yes! That's what Avery here says.—That's what my wife says.—Mr. Lu is three hundred years old. More wisdom, more shrewdness, more canniness is compressed into that skull of his than into the skull of any man living to-day."

"And a diabolical understanding," Professor Van Zant added, in his thin, harsh voice.

"YES, yes!" the doctor said impatiently. "Yet no matter if Mr. Lu's brain—his fabulous jade brain—contains all the knowledge of all the ages, he must possess—because he is human—some human weakness. Vanity! Why, otherwise, does he let no man look upon the ugly, the horrible scar that is his face?—Vanity! He is a horribly grotesque object, no doubt. Yet he must have his streak of vanity, because no man can live to any age without some streak of vanity. Well, what can he be vain about? Very probably, his brain—and his remarkable age. What do you say, Moore?"

"You are probably quite right. I should call it a very shrewd guess, doctor."

The black eyes looked at Peter almost fondly. "Yes! I am shrewd! First, I must gain access to Mr. Lu. First, I must know how to make my way into that remarkable palace under the Lake of the Flying Dragon.—But wait! I do not expect you to give me that secret yet. Avery, we must ask you now to excuse yourself. You will kindly wait outside until I call you. And if I find you have been eavesdropping, I will have your head lopped off!"

This was said with a certain heavy jocularity, yet Peter was sure that Dr. Strang would not hesitate to have the head of this man—or of any man—lopped off if it would advance the doctor's cause in any way, and provided he had that despotic privilege.

Perfectly submissive, Professor Van Zant let himself out and closed the door.

Pitching his voice very low, Dr. Strang continued, "I will tell you, frankly, Moore; there is only one man in the length and breadth of China whom I feel I can securely trust in this affair. And that man, as you may have guessed, is yourself."

Peter discovered then what he had suspected was Dr. Strang's great fault: carelessness. The doctor had assumed that the man lying on the bunk was either unconscious or asleep. He assumed that whether or not Bill Montgomery was asleep, sooner or later he would get around to killing him. But any assumption of this sort was an act—or a confession—of carelessness. Bill Montgomery might live to tell about all this; he might somehow escape death at the hands of the doctor's hirelings. The doctor, in short, took unnecessary chances; and in a dangerous game such as he was playing, a man cannot take the slightest chance.

"Van Zant," the doctor was saying, "is helpful—the very soul of willingness. But he is weak. At the least hint of torture, if he was captured, he would blab.—This is no game for weaklings. It is a dangerous game for men like you and me—men who are strong and fearless."

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One corner of Peter's mind was aware that the man on the bunk was no longer snoring. But he hoped that Bill would not attempt to settle this issue with his fists.

"Moore," Dr. Strang went on, "you are going to be my adviser. You are going to share the rewards.—Listen!" His voice dropped to a whisper; his hypnotic black eyes seemed to glow redly with an inward fire. "*I am going to kill Mr. Lu!*"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE PLAN.

THE doctor stared at Peter, watching for the effect that that startling announcement would have on the young man.

Peter took it calmly. His gray eyes narrowed a little, it was true; and a flicker played across his mouth muscles. Otherwise he betrayed no agitation or excitement—largely because he had been anticipating the announcement.

Dr. Strang came closer to him, grasped a handful of his flannel shirt at the shoulder, stared intently into his eyes. "You think I'm mad!"

"No," Peter said. "Over-optimistic."

"You think I'm no match for him!"

"That's what I think, yes. He is wonderfully protected. I grant that you might enter that palace, doctor. But you won't get within a hundred feet of Mr. Lu. Don't forget, he is a mechanical wizard. For example: I am an electrical engineer. I know something about electric lighting. But his system of illumination in that place completely baffled me. There were no lights, yet the place was flooded with light. That may mean nothing to you. But to a man like me, to whom lighting is a science, it is as incredible as if Mr. Lu, before your own eyes, brought a dead man back to life."

Dr. Strang was slowly shaking his head. "You don't understand," he said. "My whole point has escaped you. I have no intention of charging in there and killing him with weapons—or my own hands. You should credit me with greater intelligence than that. But I do say that I can fascinate him with the amazing things—all very true—that I can tell him about the human brain. I can keep him interested for weeks—months!

"Little by little, I let him realize—oh! by the subtlest of hints that I will drop and continue to drop—that the functioning of his own brain is not quite what it should be. By this time we will be the closest of friends. I have battered down his resistance to letting his horrible grotesqueness be seen by other eyes. We will be intimates!—You doubt it?"

"Go on," Peter encouraged him.

"Little by little I will urge upon him the necessity of a brain operation. If he consents to an operation, I have merely to plunge my knife into his spinal cord."

"But if he refuses to let you operate?"

Dr. Strang gave an impatient shrug. "We will be intimates by then, anyhow. I will have a dozen—a hundred—opportunities a day to kill him off! Oh, I don't intend to do it too early in the game. He will unquestionably admire me tremendously. I will learn his secrets.—Moore, why are you so incredulous?"

"I still say you're suffering from over-optimism."

"But you don't realize my capacity for winning his admiration, his re-

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spect, his friendship! Think how lonely he must be! Think what a relief it will be for him to have at last a friend—one who understands. One who does not shudder at his scar of a face, his deformed body! He will open his heart to me! More important, he will open his brain to me! I will learn his secrets. How he compounds that powerful blue poison, one drop of which, if dropped into a stream, will kill a man who drinks of that stream a mile below! You've heard of that blue poison?"

PETER nodded. "I've seen a man who died of it—the sting of the Blue Scorpion!"

Dr. Strang said excitedly, "Is it true that the body of the victim turns a luminous sapphire blue, that the eyes turn as black as balls of ebony?"

"Yes, doctor. And the brain turns to liquid—a milky, jelly-like liquid of about the consistency of the whites of eggs."

Dr. Strang grunted excitedly. "Ah!" he cried. "But that isn't all I will learn. I want the secret of his immortality. I want the hundreds of secrets which he, of all men on earth, possesses. And when I have them, I shall kill him!" Panting, he added, "Of course I am over-optimistic! Isn't it enough to set any man's brain afire? Think what it means! I shall become the most powerful man in the world! I shall control the world! The secret of that poison and the secret of perpetual life—those two alone—will make me the most powerful man in the world. You know that; you can't deny it. I could kill off the population of entire cities!—I would be the world's dictator!—Shall be! *I shall be Mr. Lu!*"

The madness in Dr. Strang's eyes was now so evident that Peter felt uncomfortable. But he knew that the medical man relished an argument, and so he gave him a good one.

"Doctor," he said, "you've overlooked a very important difficulty."

Dreams of power and glory faded from the red-rimmed eyes. "What is it?"

"You say—and I admit—that Mr. Lu will have heard of you. Certainly, he will know of your fame as a great surgeon. But hasn't it occurred to you that he would also know of the troubles you got into with the authorities in San Bernardino? Wouldn't he know that you had to leave America to escape arrest? Won't this knowledge make him suspicious of you?"

Dr. Strang replied angrily that he could explain the San Bernardino matter to anyone's satisfaction. It was remarkable, Peter reflected, how convincingly criminals are all able to justify crime. They generally blamed others.

"I depend on my nimbleness of wit to answer any question which Mr. Lu may raise—to his complete satisfaction. It was politics which was responsible for what happened at San Bernardino. Certain jealous politicians had it in for me; I was framed."

Peter had almost forgotten that one. Dr. Strang's kind were always framed!

"I CAN explain it all to Mr. Lu," the doctor said vigorously. "It is a tremendously interesting story that I will tell him some—ah—evening.—The inside story! But that is neither here nor there, Moore. I am determined to make good. Call me over-optimistic, if you wish. I shall show you! I shall win Lu's confidence. I shall steal all his secrets. Then I shall kill him . . .

"That, in brief, is my program.

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For your aid in the undertaking, you will receive such fabulous payment that it is really ridiculous, at this time, to mention terms. Nothing you can demand is too great. I know you are a romantic idealist; all real adventurers are. There's a streak of the quixotic in you, naturally. Therefore, I am proposing this plan to you, very frankly, on such grounds. Mr. Lu is a yellow menace to white civilization, and only with your help can I rid the world of him.

"Moreover, quite as frankly, I tell you that Miss O'Gilvie is to remain a hostage until I have successfully begun my negotiations with Mr. Lu. I regret the necessity of using such pressure on you; but it is, perhaps, necessary. I put it more strongly than that; your assistance is imperative to the success of my undertaking. If you will not help me—if you refuse to do what I say—I shall open that girl's head. I shall cut into her brain, and make her an incurable idiot for life!"

Peter had been anticipating that, too. But he did not betray any emotion. His eyes remained calm and attentive and thoughtful.

"I see, doctor," he said. "I see that you're determined to go through with this mad scheme of yours. Now, suppose you tell me just what I am to do."

The doctor stared at him, then said, "I am glad you are so sensible, Moore. I've been betting my money on you. You are cool, and you are clever. You are, actually, the one man in the world who can help me. Now, this is how you figure in my plan. Having been in Mr. Lu's palace, you not only know your way back—and will be able to lead me—but the very fact that you were permitted to escape with your life, the very fact that you have been permitted to live, is proof that you are somehow in Mr. Lu's good graces. Certainly, he will not deny you entrance again. Doubtless, there is something he wants from you. I want you to go there and find out what it is, promise to carry out his wishes!"

"Or be killed," Peter said.

"Bah! You won't be harmed."

"Or, perhaps," Peter said dryly, "we won't even get in. There's only one way to enter that lake, you know—by a narrow pass guarded by a village."

The doctor said impatiently, "You will send word to him from the village. He will see you.—He will see us both. We will start early to-morrow morning. My guards will take you to a meeting place on the river. You will not be harmed unless you attempt to double cross me in any way. I will leave now. I warn you not to attempt to follow me, to track me. If I find that you have gone against my orders, that very moment I will do to that girl what I threatened."

HE went to the door. Peter said, "Let me sum this up, doctor. Correct me if I'm wrong. I meet you to-morrow morning. You and I go to the Lake of the Flying Dragon—just the two of us, and, of course, a guard. Right?"

"Quite right."

"What happens to Professor Van Zant?"

"He remains with my wife and Miss O'Gilvie until you return."

"Very well. So you and I proceed to the lake. We are, of course, immediately captured and taken before Mr. Lu. We won't get nearer to him than a hundred feet, of course. He sits in the apex of a narrow, triangular room with a dazzling blue light burning behind him. Quite terrifying. You must be prepared for surprises."

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"I'm prepared for anything!" the doctor cried enthusiastically.

"When we are taken before him, I account for my presence—or rather, my boldness—by stating my willingness to act upon any orders he wishes to give me. And I leave, presumably, to act on such orders. You remain to court his friendship. If I come out of all this alive, I am to be fabulously rewarded. Is that it?"

"You can name your reward!"

"What assurance can you give me that, in our absence, Miss O'Gilvie will be perfectly safe?"

"Take my word, she will be perfectly safe. Please bear in mind, Moore, that I have left no stone unturned. I have spent a fortune—indeed, the bulk of my personal fortune. I am willing to gamble my last dollar on the success of my plan. I have spent money lavishly. I have hired and armed upwards of three thousand of these hillmen. There's nothing they wouldn't do for me. They're mad about me. I am their king! Those three thousand men will be on guard where my wife and Miss O'Gilvie and Professor Van Zant will take refuge. They could not be safer."

Peter was skeptical. "How many people, doctor, know of your plans?"

"No one knows my complete plans but yourself."

"But you have discussed details with your wife and with Professor Van Zant."

"Unimportant details."

"Has it occurred to you that Mr. Lu may somehow know of your plans?"

"Impossible! I have taken every precaution. You will admit, won't you, that I am thorough?"

Peter said quietly, "Yes. Yes. You're thorough."

Dr. Strang opened the door. "I will meet you in the morning. Once again, I warn you that any attempt you might make at double crossing me will be a grievous mistake. Good-night!"

"Good-night," Peter said.

Standing in the doorway, Peter watched the wide, sloping shoulders of the madman as they mingled with the dirty blue of the native guard. He heard the doctor say, with heavy self-importance, "All right, Avery. It's all settled."

Peter pulled the door shut.

THE moment he did so, Bill Montgomery sat up and swung his feet to the floor. Through puffed eyelids, which reduced his vision to mere slits, he gasped, "Good God, Moore! Aren't you going to do anything?"

Bolting the door, Peter turned slowly and said: "Not so loud. The doctor, in his excitement, completely forgot that you were here. Take this gun. If he comes back, it means he's remembered. And if he does come back, there's nothing for us to do but shoot it out."

He retrieved Bill's gun from the corner of the room, where he had tossed it, and handed it to him. Picking up his own revolver from the foot of the bunk, he dropped it into the holster at his belt.

The man from Montana stood up and started for the door with the gun in his hand.

Peter said quietly, "The moment you open that door, Bill, we die."

"But what are we going to do?"

"Sit tight."

"But I'm trapped! He'll remember that I'm here. He's sure to come back! I'd rather die shooting my way out than be shot here like a cornered animal!"

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"Let's use our heads. How much of my conversation with the doctor did you hear?"

"Every word of it!"

"Then you know that there are at least a dozen armed hill men out there. There are doubtless a hundred others scattered about, to keep my men under control. For the present, I'm counting on the doctor's one great weakness—carelessness. It was careless of him to talk so freely with you lying there. It was careless of him not to have you shot immediately. He doubtless intended to get around to it—but he forgot. We are betting on his carelessness. It's the only thing we can bet on. There's nothing we can do, I assure you."

The cattle prince groaned. He began to pace up and down the small area, softly, mechanically beating a palm with a fist, frowning, muttering. He turned suddenly, almost savagely, on the engineer.

"I'm not thinking of myself," he said. "I know you're not thinking of yourself. It's Susan."

"Yes," Peter said. "But there's nothing we can do. By sitting tight, by doing nothing now, we may be able to help her later."

Bill Montgomery expelled his breath explosively. "That maniac isn't coming back!"

"He's evidently forgotten that you were here. In the morning, after I leave, you may have a chance to do something, although I don't know what it could be. When I leave, this guard will be withdrawn. If I'm not given a chance to talk to any of my men, I'll leave a note for you to my most reliable man."

"Chinese?"

"Yes."

"Damn the Chinese!"

"This man is absolutely dependable. His name's Lee Gow. He knows this country. He'll arm all our men—and help you find Susan. I don't know how you can go about it. Frankly, I'm counting on only one thing: the doctor's carelessness. A cog may slip somewhere in this elaborate scheme of his."

"Do you think he was lying about those three thousand armed hill men?"

Peter shook his head.

Bill Montgomery groaned. "Have you ever been in a jam as tight as this before?"

"Nope."

THE man from Montana walked toward him. "I want to apologize for barging in here the way I did," he said. "I've had you wrong all along."

"Forget about it, Bill."

"I want to take back every one of those damnably idiotic things I said. I deserved a worse beating than I got."

"I'm sorry," Peter admitted, "that we couldn't have had a chin-chin first."

Bill shot out his hand. "I want to shake your hand!" he said.

He gripped Peter's hand. And Peter sensed that the man from Montana had slipped unconsciously into another rôle. He might have said, in a deep, throbbing voice, "When two strong men from the ends of the earth—" or something as fervently dramatic, as suitable to the occasion. The way his head was held, the way in which he threw his shoulders back, was sufficiently eloquent. "Ringed in by foes," his attitude said, "we may be dead ere dawn comes. But we die fighting!"

He relinquished Peter's hand, and going to the bunk, seated himself on the edge of it, his hands on his knees, his arms bowing out, his attitude one of deep thought. This new attitude

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said plainly, "Face to face with death, let us not despair! There may be a way. Somehow, God willing, we will save her!"

Peter, understanding all this attitudinizing, did not blame him. And he knew that, however Bill dramatized his big moments, underneath he was fearless, valiant. He liked Bill, and he hoped he could somehow get Bill out of this mess unhurt.

The engineer went to the little window beside the door and looked out. The window faced the east. Squarely in the center of the black panorama, on a distant mountain range, he saw the silvery glow of moonrise. Clotted white clouds in an ink-black sky diffused the white radiance. The rim of the moon appeared and transformed the blackness of the ravine into a splendor of silver and black. The great power house became a giant cube of the precious metal. The river was ebony.

The moon rose above the mountain, white and glittering with hardness, as if its surfaces were of diamond. It made the construction camp a bivouac. The cold, white light glittered on rifles. The camp was full of men with rifles—hundreds of them.

Dr. Strang might be careless of details, but in his larger plans he was extravagantly thorough. At least a thousand of his men were waiting, to make sure that Peter Moore kept that early morning rendezvous.

TO BE CONTINUED NEXT WEEK.

MAX BRAND RETURNS NEXT WEEK

With a great Western novel, "The Longhorn Feud"

Indian Vengeance

THE Iroquois Indians were known as the fiercest tribe east of the Mississippi in early days. Of the many tales told of their extreme cruelty, the one about their six hundred mile snowshoe journey of vengeance is most interesting.

In 1712 the Fox Indians, from the Wisconsin region, made an attack upon Detroit, which was occupied by the French. The Iroquois of Western New York considered this an invasion of their territory, and, accordingly, made plans to crush the Foxes. A mid-winter surprise attack was decided upon, and a band of one hundred warriors was chosen to make the journey of some six hundred miles from New York to the Fox village, west of Lake Michigan. The snow was deep, and the warriors had to wear snowshoes. After a long, hard tramp they arrived at the site of Chicago, where they rested a day or two before making the attack.

The Foxes were completely surprised by the onslaught, and, though possessing greater numbers than their enemies, were so unprepared that many were killed and the rest driven into the wilderness.

After burning the village, the Iroquois returned to their home, making a total of more than twelve hundred miles that they had traveled on snowshoes on this journey of vengeance.

William Patterson.

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Sunken Dollars

By CAPTAIN DINGLE

Gene Selwyn knew too much about that wrecked windjammer—so he was framed for murder

"It was the second mate!" Gene cried furiously

LEADING UP TO THIS INSTALLMENT

TWICE since he left Melbourne on the windjammer Godiva for a trip around Cape Horn has Gene Selwyn been accused of murder; more than once he has barely escaped with his own life. It was a stray fancy that caused Gene to sign on the old clipper ship just before she sailed. He had quarreled with his rich father that morning, and when he saw bags of silver being loaded, and a pretty girl smiled at him from the ship's rail, he went aboard and asked the mate, Mr. Jolly, for a seaman's berth.

As the Godiva approaches Cape Horn on her way to England, Gene notices that Captain Larking becomes apprehensive, apparently afraid of certain of his officers, especially Purbrick, the second mate, and Doakes, the bosun. These two, with Benjamin, the steward, are partners in some scheme, but neither Gene nor Judy Larking, the captain's daughter, can fathom it.

Passing through the Straits of Lemaire in a snowstorm, with Purbrick at the wheel, the Godiva runs afoul of Sail Rock and sinks. Gene and Judy, cast up on the rock, discover they are alone. They are rescued by a passing steamer, and get to England, where they meet Purbrick, Captain Larking and Rupert, owner of the cargo of silver dollars that went down with the Godiva.

A marine inquiry is held, and the ship's officers are exonerated in the sinking of the Godiva, but Judy is alarmed when Gene does not appear to testify. Purbrick tells her that Gene is in prison, accused of the murder of Jock Gowan, his Scottish friend. Gowan, in the meantime, turns up at a police station, says he has been shanghaied and escaped, and demands to be taken to the county prison where Gene is held. Judy learns from her con-

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science-stricken father that he had deliberately wrecked the Godiva at Rupert's demand.

CHAPTER XVI.

A RAT TO SMELL.

JOCK emerged from the police station, a flustered, red-faced official behind him.

"Now whaur's the laddie who murdered me?" demanded Jock. He was taken in a car to the prison, and guided by a very unsmiling jailer to a cell. A lantern was brought, for the cells were dark, and a sleepy-eyed prisoner rolled from a comfortless cot and blinked at the yellow gleam. Jock peered back.

"Jock! You must have sprung straight from heaven!" shouted Gene. Jock stepped forward and took Gene's hand in a tremendous grip, shaking it solemnly.

"Laddie, it wisna frae heaven—it was nearer t'other place. Come on oot. Somebuddy hes tae look me in the eye, and I hae a guid idee whaur tae find him. Let the man oot, ye hauf cuiked haggis!" Jock shouted at the jailer, who muttered something about orders.

"Orders be damned!" snapped Jock. "The laddie ought never tae be here. Gin I were him, ye'd pay smartly for yer lunkheided folly. Free ma friend, and gie's a chance tae catch the whelp who shanghaied me aff ta sea in a stinkin' blubber hunter!"

Jock's tongue was thick with burr, mainly because of his excitement and anger. Even though no crime could be charged to his friend, officialdom was slow to move, and it was late when the disheveled pair walked forth free and living men.

"I'd like to know who got me in the Stone Frigate on that murder charge," said Gene grimly. "Whoever it was must have been some star. I was supposed to have driven you out in a carriage, come home alone, with blood-stains all over the carriage, and your wallet and watch in my pockets!"

Jock had recovered his property from the police, and as they walked along took out his wallet and riffled over the notes.

"There's a rat to smell, Gene," he said sagely. "Allowin' f'r what wis spent before the fall o' Jock Gowan, my siller's all here. 'Twis a good watch, too, and even it was na' taken. I've a shrewd picture in ma heid o' a fine gentleman who wis very friendly wi' me aboot the time yon bar fellow wis goin' tae kick us oot. I doot we can find him before morrnin'. Maybe he thought yon wis a joke. It wis none too guid a joke to pit ye in limbo f'r a murderer, Gene. I have a sense o' humor, but I dinna like that."

Gene had steered their course towards his lodgings. He was trying hard to recover some memory of the night before, but could not. He remembered drinking with Jock, who had already had enough, and he vaguely remembered going into a private room, and ordering food. He could recall everything up to the moment when Jock's head fell into a plate of steak and onions and when he himself became dizzy—after that, blank.

"WHAT was the fellow like, Jock?" he asked suddenly.

"A lean, brown-faced one. Might be a sailor—"

"Was he aboard that whaler?"

"Not he! He wis too clever to go fishin', laddie. He wis the sort o' man ye'd find—I'll describe him." Jock started on a verbal sketch which gradually limned every feature, every phys-

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ical point, every mannerism of a man whose vivid portrayal made Gene stop as if shot and grip Jock's arm so that he cried out.

"Jock! Are you sure?" Gene demanded, thrusting his face close to Jock's and glaring into his eyes. "You're not dreaming?"

"If I was, yer pinch o' my arrm wad wake me—wake the dead! I am not dreamin'!"

"It's Purbrick!"

"And who's Purbrick?"

"The second mate of the Godiva! The swine who had me locked in the lazaret and nearly drowned me! The gentleman who knows more about that wreck than the skipper himself! Come on, Jock! We'll see the gentleman!"

Jock protested that it was late, but Gene only hurried faster. They went to the hotel where Purbrick had stayed, and knocked at the door and rang the bell until a sleepy porter peered through the glass and ordered them off.

"Get out, y' tramps! I'll call the police!" he growled.

Gene looked at Jock, and Jock at Gene, and in the light from the hallway realized perhaps for the first time what they really looked like after their adventures. Gene was too angry to grin, but Jock saw the justice of the porter's suspicions. He touched his friend on the arm, warning him against attracting unwelcome attention, then produced his wallet.

"My mannie, we're no tramps," he said soothingly, proffering a note of fair denomination. "We've bin tumbled oot of a carriage. Mr. Purbrick's a friend o' oors, and he'll lend us clothes till we can buy some if ye'll take oor names tae him."

"Who are you?" demanded the porter, less offensively, his hand all but touching the money.

"Tell him it's Mr. Rupert," Gene said quickly. The man's eyes glinted, and he drew back his hand. "The son of the one you know," was added hastily. The money was taken and the door half shut.

"I'll take your word for that, mister," the porter said, "though you don't look like him in this light. Sorry to say Mr. Purbrick left early this evening. I'll take this little tip for my trouble in coming down. Your father went, too." The door was nearly shut when Jock thrust in his foot

"Now, laddie, earrn yer fee nicely. We're no Mr. Rupert's kin, but we hae business wi' Purbrick. Whaur's he gone?"

Perhaps Jock's blue eyes held a fire which promised no good to the taker of unearned siller. Perhaps the combined pressure of Jock's foot and knee, and Gene's shoulders, gave too great promise of a forced entry. The porter abruptly opened the door.

"Listen, gents, I'll lose my job if there's a ruckus this time o' night. I'll tell you the tale. They were going to take a boat to some big port. They were all packed up. It's more than my job's worth to tell you this. Not supposed to split on guests, I ain't. But I carried all their ruffy luggage down two flights o' stairs, and never got a ruffy bean for it! You're gents, though you don't look it. That's all I know, take my oath, except I heard this Purbrick and the one called Rupert havin' a hell of a row about a shipwreck. Now buzz off, like good sports, and leave me to shut the door."

GENE went to his lodgings, taking Jock with him. Once behind a locked door, with a discreet bottle of Scotch between them, Jock heard a tale of the sea the like of which he

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had believed only existed in fiction. Intimate though he had been with Gene and Judy on that homeward passage from the Argentine, nothing like this had been volunteered to him.

"Now, you sober up," concluded Gene. "Get clean again, and shed that woozy overhang—here, try a hair of the dog—nothing like it to drive off the fog of a staggering toot—then you will want to go back and find your Peggy. I don't believe she's ditched you, Jock. No decent girl would, and I know the sort of girl she was because you sketched her as clearly as you just sketched Purbrick."

Jock seized Gene's hand. There was moisture in the keen blue eyes. "Gene, she's all I painted her. But she's gone fra me. I'll tell ye aboot it— But why do we linger here? Why are we na' away after this carrion Purbrick, to catch him before he sails?"

"That can wait," said Gene, springing up. "I've got to see Judy first, and make sure she's all right."

"I'll go wi' ye," said Jock.

Gene took one look at his friend's disheveled, battle-scarred appearance and shook his head. "You'll stay here," he replied, "and sober up. Maybe," he added, "you'll have use for more than one hair of the dog. I'll leave the whole bottle in your care."

Jock sighed mournfully as he squinted at the opaque container.

"Ah, weel," he said, "it's na' so comfortin' as Peggy, but it's the next best thing."

Gene hastened to the Larking home, eager to reassure Judy of his safety. The blinds were down. The servant who opened the door was red-eyed. Judy came to him in a dimly lit room and he saw, before her face lighted up with relief at recognition of him, that she was very white.

"Gene!" she gasped. "You are free?"

He smiled at her. "I seem to be. It was all a mistake—a mistake for which some one will have to answer. But, Judy, dear, you're so pale. What is it?"

"Father's dead," she said.

Gene stared blankly at her, then took her hand and led her to a sofa, feeling as if nothing that he could say was adequate. He had seen something of Judy's courage, but she surprised him now.

"They've killed him!" she said quietly. "They've murdered him, Gene." Then, like a burst of waters through a broken dam, words overwhelmed him. "Purbrick assured him that I was in the other boat! Most of the crew were drowned—imprisoned in the forecastle by the fallen foremast—everybody else but Purbrick and father and Tony Pandy and Stag Onions went away in that other boat—the one I was supposed to be in—and nothing has been heard of them! Gene, the Godiva was cast away!"

"Oh, surely not that," Gene soothed her, certain that her nerves had given way. "I heard, just before I left my lodgings, that your father was cleared at the inquiry, Judy. The evidence was that Jolly was in charge, and he mistook Sail Rock for a ship. Others have done that. Your father had nothing to be afraid of— except that you were lost, dear."

"It's a lie!" The words came sharply from her pallid lips. The tone shocked him, and he gripped her hand. It was cold, and gave him no answering pressure. "Father was conscious for five minutes before the doctor came, and he told me. Mr. Jolly was not on watch. Father and Purbrick were.

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"It was all arranged. Rupert held a lot of father's paper—the Godiva was in debt up to the hilt and father was desperate—Rupert was in a hole too — they had obtained all the insurance the ship would bear, and—and"—she looked straight into Gene's eyes—"I think when you told father that the ship could be raised, something snapped in him. I can't understand it, but I'm sure it's true. Oh, it's better that he is dead!"

Gene tried awkwardly to comfort her. There was nothing that he could say, for words seemed so utterly futile. Besides, a terrific problem suddenly reared up before him. It was a serious thing to wreck a ship bearing heavy insurance—and his father would be the prime loser. Gene knew that claim had been put in for insurance on the ship, and had only been held up because of his earlier cable from South America. What if Larking had been shocked to his death by the appearance of Judy, who must know something about the peculiar circumstances of the wreck?

Gene didn't believe that it was any consideration for himself that had worried Larking. A man who would let a sailor be clapped into confinement on a silly charge like that murder of Doakes affair, and let him remain imprisoned when the ship was wrecked, was scarcely likely to worry much over that sailor's ultimate end. And Gene did believe that whatever Larking's real design, surely Judy's drowning did not enter into it.

"Judy, dear," he said at last, "you mustn't believe this. Captain Larking was a sick man. His nerves had gone. When you, whom he believed he had lost, suddenly appeared it was too much for him. Why, my dear girl, nobody deliberately wrecks a ship which is carrying a breadtank full of dollars! Did he say anything about that?"

She shook her head. "He stopped suddenly—right after telling me that he had cast the ship away—and he looked at me as if he wished he had not told me as much. There was horror in his eyes, Gene. Horror! Then the doctor came—and—he never spoke again. Oh!"

She was against his breast, sobbing, and now the tears came and her body shook in his enfolding arms. He let her cry herself out, and when she was quiet again he left her to the old servant's care.

"I'll come in the morning, Judy. Please let me help in any way I can. If you need money—"

She shook her head, urging him towards the door.

After a futile search along the waterfront for Purbrick and Rupert, Gene returned to his hotel room and never left it until morning. The night brought him no rest, for the more he thought about it the less did he like what he had heard. Of course he must let his father know what he had heard, even if he kept back the source. But he found it very hard to believe that tale, told by a nerve racked mariner who had lost his ship and almost his only daughter. Though he closed his eyes, counted sheep, sleep was powerless against the puzzle of that ship with her freight of specie deliberately cast away in a God-forsaken spot like the Straits.

Only when he had uttered aloud the conviction that Larking's tale was the babbling of a broken mind did sleep come to him. Then it was daylight again, and he sprang fully awake out of the briefest catnap to the realization that a new day meant only a new attack on the problem. What he had

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forced himself to regard as a babbling tale abruptly came back upon him as something immensely more than that—something decidedly to be investigated.

He called out to Jock, whose resounding snores had abetted Gene's insomnia during the night. The Scot was still filmy-eyed—and still dwelling on his lost love.

CHAPTER XVII.

GOING SOUTH.

JOCK'S tale was scarcely surprising to Gene. When a man stays away from his girl for four years, does not even write to her for two, and half a world separates them, it can hardly be expected that the homing man will find things exactly as he anticipates. Jock's Peggy had only done what any domestically inclined lass might do, in preferring substance to shadow. She had married a solid, home-staying tradesman and settled inland, far from salt water. All the news that Jock could gather indicated that Peggy already had one lusty baby and was well on towards launching another.

"I dinna gie one wee blast!" Jock insisted, and tears appeared in his eyes. He was apparently quite prepared to carry on with the business of drowning sorrow.

"I ha' nothing left to live for, Gene. The sheep can go ta th' de'il. Call the waiter, laddie; I'll buy ye a wee drink. Call everybody in th' hoose. I'll buy 'em all a wee drink."

Gene poured another drink from his own bottle, a good stout one, and put no water in it. Desperate cases call for desperate cures. In five minutes Jock snored stertorously on the sofa, and Gene hauled him into an easy posture, then left him and locked the door on him. He left word that his room was not to be opened until he returned, then he went around to see Judy. She would be interested in Jock's trouble; perhaps it might help her to see her own as a little less overwhelming. He found her surprisingly alert; then he saw that anger was the cause.

"Gene, Mr. Rupert was here last night after you left!" she said as soon as the door was closed upon him. Rupert's name meant little to Gene for a moment, but she went on to tell him things which gradually set everything in its proper place. "He came to see father—and, Gene, when he saw me he almost collapsed as father did! When I told him that father was dead, that our appearance had shocked him into collapse—and I mentioned that you were out of jail—I really thought the man would fall dead at my feet.

"He asked almost frantically if father had said anything to me before he died—tried to make me tell him more than I really did hear. And when at last he left me, I watched through the window, and he got into a hansom, Gene, and I am sure Purbrick was in it!"

"Where did they go?" asked Gene quickly.

"How can I tell? The hansom went up the street—fast." Judy bit her lip, staring into Gene's eyes. "What is there about me that shocks men so different as father and Mr. Rupert?" she whispered.

"There's nothing about you, dear. Whatever it is it's not you personally. There's something fishy in this shipwreck, Judy, and I've got to clear it up for my own father's sake." Gene, too, bit his lip thoughtfully, and met her gaze. "Please believe that I'm not unkind when I say that I'm rather glad Captain Larking's beyond reach of

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trouble in the matter. Yes, yes, I know." He quickly gathered her to him and comforted her, telling her that he would take care of all burial arrangements.

SHE threw off her momentary sadness, and tried to smile while he told her about Jock. She could appreciate Jock's trouble, though, with Gene, she had scarcely felt surprised to hear the result of so long an absence. When Gene explained how he had left his friend, and suggested that she might consent to meet him and give him a word of cheer after he came out of his drunken sleep, she promptly agreed.

"I liked him," she said. "It will do me good, too. I feel choked in this house, Gene. Nothing but grimness has greeted me since I first entered it this time. I wish I were leaving it again."

Gene wanted to suggest a way by which she might leave it permanently, but his regard for Judy was more than infatuation; it was emphatically not the sort of regard to urge him to break in upon her present sorrow with so radical a suggestion. Later, perhaps, and not so much later, maybe, but anyway not now.

"I expect I shall have to go south again, and try to get at that wreck," he said. "Father wants me to. I wish some way could be found of you coming, too, Judy. But I doubt if you would want to, even if it were possible. Shall we go around to Jock now?"

On the way, Judy clutched his arm.

"Gene, you were joking, weren't you? Can't I go? I'd do anything to get away from this place. I feel that everybody I meet knows all about that wreck—knows what father told me. I wouldn't be any trouble. I wasn't a nuisance, was I?"

He laughed.

"You never learned how to be a nuisance, Judy. I want no better shipmate. But if you feel that folks are looking at you now, what about their tongues if you started off with me on another long trip with no definite destination? I'm not sure that it'll be a nice trip either. Rather unpleasant for you, I should think."

"I don't want a nice trip! Don't you think I want to prove to myself that father was out of his mind when he spoke of casting away his ship? Folks can't say more than I feel they are thinking now. And Aunt Kitty would come with me." He did not answer. The proposition staggered him.

She thought his hesitation was due to other causes, and said quickly: "I can pay my share, Gene. I ought to go. You know I ought. If you feel compelled to find out things for your father, why can't I do the same for mine?"

"It's not quite the same thing, Judy," he said gravely. "What I find may hurt you."

"Nothing can hurt me as much as doubt! Not even discovering the truth, Gene. Let me go with you."

They reached the hotel and he was saved the necessity of an immediate reply by opening the door and finding Jock still snoring. Judy drew back for an instant, wrinkling her nose; then pity took charge of her and she knelt beside the couch and loosened the sleeping man's neckwear.

"He's nearly choking with that around his neck," she said.

WHEN Jock awoke, and found Judy sitting beside him, he stumbled to his feet and looked ashamed of himself. Without a word he thrust past her into the bath-

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room, and the splashing of water was soon heard.

Gene grinned, and he and Judy waited; but Jock did not reappear, and presently the closing of a door was heard beyond the bathroom. Gene leaped to his feet.

"He's off by the other door!" he cried, and darted into the hall. He caught Jock halfway down the stairs and hauled him back, struggling desperately.

"Don't be a fool, Jock! Come on back. Judy's in trouble, too. She wants to speak to you. I have something to say, too. Besides, you can't go out. I've taken your money—you poor loon!"

"Gie it back to me! I need a drink. Whut d'ye mean by bringing a decent lassie ta see me? I tho't ye a friend, Gene Selwyn."

"I am a friend. So's Judy. Come back to my room." Gene had an inspiration. "You won't want to chuck away your money when I tell you what's in my mind, Jock. You'll need it to lend to me."

"Are ye in trouble yersel'?" queried Jock, suddenly solicitous.

"Come in and talk it over." Gene led him back to Judy, and they talked for an hour over coffee and food, which Jock sadly needed. Gene loaned him a fresh collar and tie, and brushed off his clothes, so that when the coffee took effect and Judy began to comfort him over his lost sweetheart Jock was almost himself again. When Gene broached the subject of his trip south, and offered to take Jock to give him a chance in hard work to forget his troubles, the response was immediate and eager.

Judy looked on wistfully meanwhile.

"I'll come wi' ye, Gene. 'Twill be a better way o' spendin' my leave than the way I had in mind." Jock's eye twinkled as he glanced at Judy.

AFTER the quiet burial of Larking, Gene and Jock walked back with Judy to the forlorn cottage that had been her home. She looked piteously at Gene when they were inside.

"I'm afraid to stay here, Gene." She told the maid to go, and when the door closed behind her: "I've got to go away. It's too much for me." She looked her meaning. Gene avoided her eyes. Jock had picked up the evening paper from the table and stood in the window glancing over the headlines. Presently he uttered a grunt.

"Here's a bit o' news for ye, Gene. Two survivors from yer wreck have been taken in to Gallegos. The mate and steward."

"Where?" Gene was eager. He glanced at the item. Here were the very men who would know all about that wreck! He thought quickly.

"Jock, you know plenty of people in that port. Can you cable somebody you can trust to get hold of those two men and look after them well until we get down there? Tell them it'll be worth their while to wait to see me."

"Oh, if it's Benjamin, he'll know the truth!" Judy cried. "He was father's most faithful friend. Gene, you must take me! I can't stay here. I'll see Aunt Kitty at once. You must take me. If you won't, I'll go alone."

The prospect of immediate activity braced Jock. He hurried out on his errand. Gene saw Judy as far as her Aunt Kitty's house and left her to do some business of his own. He had not given her his promise, but somehow he felt that when he and Jock did start south she would be in the same ship at least. And that is how it was. In-

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stead of two taking train to the big port to catch the mail steamer to Buenos Aires, there were four; and at almost the same time, in another port, Mr. Rupert was showing to Purbrick, with shaking hands and suffused face, the very same news item that had started Gene off.

"What shall we do now?" groaned Rupert.

"Why ask me?" Purbrick retorted. "I'm getting out of here, quick. You do as you like."

"But Benjamin *knows!*" Rupert said fiercely. Purbrick caught his eye, and his own face went suddenly white. "We've got to go on," Rupert declared.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BENJAMIN.

THE mail steamer to Buenos Aires and that to Puerto Gallegos carried them south far quicker than they had come north in the cargo steamer, and Jock began to regain his clear eye and brisk step as he neared his adopted home. Once the liquor was out of him he took a tremendous interest in the job ahead and long before the Gallegos pilot came on board he had arranged everything on paper.

He had worked out figures for Gene, and they had decided to charter a small steamer with divers and tackle the wreck without any other outside assistance. Whatever might prove to be the truth, there was sufficient mystery about the wreck to make Gene cautious. Perhaps in his heart he believed that Larking's confession was the raving of a dying man whose brain had been cracked by the loss and recovery of a loved daughter.

If that should prove true, then all hands concerned would be well satisfied to have the wreck reached and the silver lifted. If Larking had been telling only the harsh truth—well, Mr. Selwyn would be very glad indeed to have the silver raised and thereby avoid a serious financial blow.

"Be on our own to-morrow, Judy," smiled Gene. "I'm glad you came, now. Your Aunt Kitty's the best gooseberry in the world—and the sea has given you back your sparkle."

The sparkle faded surprisingly at the remark, though Judy smiled. She was thinking again of all that she had tried to forget during the pleasant voyage. If she had not twice seen Rupert almost collapse at her feet, as her father had actually done, she could have felt surer that her father had been wandering in his mind when he made that horrid confession. She was afraid, and for a moment went pale; then the color flooded her face again, and she touched Gene's hand.

"I shall be glad to know the truth," she said. "I had almost let myself forget what we are after. Now, the sooner I know, the better. The worst is not so bad as uncertainty, and if it is the worst—well, I shall be glad father didn't live to have it discovered." She looked silently over the dancing sea for a moment. "Gene," she said then, "it's a miracle that Benjamin should have been saved. He knows."

"It's Jolly I want to see," smiled Gene. "If anybody can tell us how that ship got where she did, he can."

"Benjamin has been with father all his seagoing life, Gene."

"I seem to remember getting into a mess on Benjamin's account, but still he left me to drown in the lazaret, Judy. And I don't recall that he made any tremendous effort to prevent you—"

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"We shall see," she insisted stoutly. "Father believed I was in the other boat—that's with Mr. Jolly and Benjamin, you know. I don't see that it's any sillier to think that both of them believed that I was in father's boat—"

"With Purbrick! Judy, if there's a nigger in the woodpile it's a white man. Not to mention names, I'll bet it begins with Purbrick."

SHORTLY the steamer came to port. On the wharf was Jock's friend, and right ahead of the steamer's berth lay a sturdy steam trawler, whose skipper and owner had fallen upon an evil season. So complete were Jock's plans that six hours after Gene cleared his goods through the customs, the Peregrine steamed away with all on board bound avowedly on a cruise after deep sea biological subjects. Tucked away in the skipper's room were Mr. Jolly and Benjamin the steward, and to them, once out of harbor, came Gene and Judy.

There had been hardships in the Godiva's wreck aside from those suffered by Judy and Gene. Jolly and Benjamin looked like animated ghosts, even though ever since Jock's cable message to his friend they had been full fed and tenderly cared for. The way Benjamin greeted Judy was a revelation to Gene, who had sometimes doubted the sincerity of the steward. Mr. Jolly had little to say, though he said that little with much emphasis.

"That boat of ours was never meant to get clear!" he said. "She had been prepared to leak. The bread and water containers were empty. The oars had been sawed half through. Ship murderers, and men murderers— Beg pardon, Miss Judy, I—I—" The mate reddened with embarrassment. Judy hastened to put him at ease.

"No doubt that the ship was cast away?" Gene asked.

"Not a little bit! Something fishy from the time she left Melbourne."

"Fishy's right!" snarled Benjamin. "I was supposed to go in Captain Larking's boat, 'long o' Miss Judy. I 'ope to meet Purbrick some day!"

"He told father that I was with you in your boat, Benjamin," said Judy. "Oh, I wish it could be all forgotten and we were leaving the ship to lie where she is."

"Might as well," muttered Benjamin. "Never get no good out o' meddlin' with 'er now." He glanced swiftly at Gene.

"I don't see why you waste time, either," said Jolly. "Suppose you can reach her, what are you going to find that'll prove anything? The only ones who know how she struck are Purbrick and me and the skipper. He's dead; Purbrick's given his yarn, and cleared himself. All I can say won't open the inquiry again. I did think Sail Rock was a vessel—they didn't! Don't tell me they did. But they swore to it, and Purbrick's loose. I'm glad to be out of it with my hide intact."

"Right you are, Mister Jolly," Benjamin agreed. "Waste o' time, I calls it— Waste o' money, too, Miss Judy."

"Don't forget the insurance," said Gene quietly. Benjamin gave him another keen look. "If all's in order, and I find nothing more than is known, I suppose my father will have to pay out. But after hearing about those boats, and remembering my own experience—and Judy's—I shall try to find all I can and see what I can save for my father. It won't take long. We know just how to find her, don't we, Judy?"

"I can see her now!" whispered Judy, and shivered.

"Besides," Gene smiled at Benjamin,

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"Mr. Rupert will be glad to have his silver dollars recovered. Didn't you say, Judy, that he was a broken man when you saw him?"

"Broke? You're gettin' 'ot, my son!" ejaculated Benjamin, and his jaw sagged. He waited for Gene to go on deck, and looked as if he wanted to talk to Judy alone, but she ran out after Gene, and never heard what the steward might have said. Jock met them, and it was a new, indignant, sober faced Jock. He had avoided interfering with their interview, but he had heard from his friend the tale of the castaways, and it had driven Peggy out of his mind for good.

"D'ye ken, Gene, if yon story's all true, it's a piece o' devil's work that somebody ought ta swing for? Seven days that boat wis adrift in the Straits, wi'oot watter, or food, in snow and ice. Sinkin', oars broken, dyin' one by one until all were gone but two. It's cruel ta be takin' yon laddies back to the scene o' their harrdships. Canna we let the ship lie? Dinna Meester Jolly know all that's ta be known aboot the wreck? He telt me he wis sure she wis put awa'. Is na that suffeecient ta protect yer father's interests? Gene, laddie, ma hearrt bleeds f'r the puir fellies. The little Benjamin chap nigh wept at thocht o' returrnin'."

"It's almost as pitiful as Judy's experience," said Gene with a wry grin. "You're not forgetting that, are you, Jock? Don't worry about Benjamin's feelings. The sooner we get to work the sooner we return home. Benjamin could tell us a lot if he would. But if he won't tell Judy all he knows I'm sure I have a poor chance of learning anything except by search. Go and have a chat with Aunt Kitty, Jock. She's just a bit seasick. There's a wee reekie o' fush aboot this auld trawler—"

"Don't I smell it mesel'?" retorted Jock with a grimace. "Noo ye mention it I feel a bit wobbly in my wame. I think I'll leave Aunt Kitty to her own enjoyment of it. Bein' seasick's one thing a body can do better alone."

THE Peregrine was used to fishing in bitter seas, and she was a fine seaworthy vessel, but that was no guarantee of comfort for passengers. As the Straits were approached, a stinging gale blew up with snow from the south, and for twelve hours she plunged hove-to, ice sheathing her bows, her deep welldeck a welter of savage broken water. Gene remained on the bridge almost continually, scarcely taking time for the minimum of sleep necessary for well-being; and much to his surprise his most constant companion was Benjamin, the steward. Jolly, who might have been expected to show some interest, stayed below in the stuffy cabin, smoking unending pipes, wanting no more fresh air, careless of what the sea might do if only he might be permitted to froust in his own steam in comfort.

Gene tried to get Benjamin to talk, without success. The little man talked a lot to Judy, but though she gladly told Gene all she heard it was nothing helpful, for the beginning and middle and end of Benjamin's chant was "Give it up! Let sleepin' dogs lie! No good'll come of this v'yage, miss, and mark my words."

"Why don't you stay below in the dry, then, steward?" Gene asked for the twelfth time one chill hour when the gale shrieked and the sleet flew like shot, and the night was as thick as soup. "If you're not interested in the job, there's no need for you to get frozen. I'd say you had a bellyful of hardship in that boat."

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"In a manner o' speakin', I did," growled Benjamin, shivering. Not another word did he utter for an hour, standing glued to the bridge dodger, his face blue and his teeth gleaming. Gene had persuaded the trawler skipper, Sweeny, to let the steward come up there in partial shelter, because Gene wanted company first, and secondly he hoped to catch some word let slip in a moment of laxity.

At the end of an hour the mate of the trawler relieved the skipper, and brought with him mugs of scalding coffee. Benjamin sucked his down as if it were cold beer, and it seemed to put life into him. As soon as the skipper had gone below and the bridge was silent again except for the uproar of the sea and wind, Benjamin abruptly spoke to Gene.

"You saw Purbrick, alive, with yer own eyes?"

"Yes. So did Miss Larking. Why?" returned Gene.

"Ah!" Benjamin closed up again like an oyster. At the end of another painful silence he jerked out: "S'pose Miss Judy couldn't be mistook?"

"I don't believe she could." Again Gene asked: "Why?"

"Nothink. It ain't my place to talk. I was Captain Larking's steward for 'arf a lifetime, mister. What I knows about his business I hangs on to, until I know it's to Miss Judy's interests to tell it. But this I can give you my word on, and you can make what you like of it: If that was Purbrick, and he and Rupert know that you and Judy is together, and know you can get at that breadtank, you ain't goin' to arrive on the spot very much before them. Better give it up. It'll do you no good to find it—if you do. I ain't crazy, neither. There's one man on earth I want to put 'ands on, and that's Purbrick. But still I says, stop meddlin' an' go 'ome with Miss Judy afore she sees more trouble."

Having said which, Benjamin clambered down from the bridge and walked aft, where he stood for an hour staring into the blackness astern.

GENE was somewhat surprised the next day when Captain Sweeny called Jock and himself to his cabin and shut the door. The captain was built like a granite bollard. Gene was not quite sure that he liked him; but at least the man was a hard fisted sailorman, and that was the first essential.

"I'm no crab, Mister Selwyn," he said, "and I'm a man o' my word. I agreed to terms offered me, and it's none o' my business what you do, barrin' anything illegal. But you seem very anxious about some other party. What's the game? In few words, and I'm not just curious. If it's the Godiva's dollars you're after, I'd have taken it kindly if Jock had said so. Lifting coin is a job that usually calls for shares. And if there's another party, who has the right of it? That's reasonable, ain't it?"

Gene and Jock exchanged glances, and Jock wisely let his friend do the talking.

"So you know about the Godiva," remarked Gene, thinking hard.

"Who don't?" returned Sweeny. "I read about it. From what I read I don't give you much chance of making a profit out of her. But you ain't spending all this money on a wild goose chase— Say! Selwyn, wasn't you the witness they couldn't find? Wasn't you one of the men saved from her?"

Sweeny suddenly stood up, and his eyes glittered. He fixed his gaze upon Jock and shook his head reproachfully.

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"Jock, laddie, you ought to have been more open with me. I'm no shark."

Gene believed he had fathomed Sweeny, who after all was only looking for the main chance. He decided that his best plan was to be frank, lay his cards on the table, and not keep too many aces up his sleeve.

"Jock did quite right, according to my instructions, Sweeny," he said. "I was in the ship. And perhaps you're right about there being no chance of paying expenses out of her. I feel sure myself that it's a wild goose chase. But you see, my father happens to be the underwriter who insured her; and there was something pretty queer about her loss. My object is to try to find out all about that; and the other party I expect to appear will try to prevent anybody finding out about it."

Gene had, as he thought, cleverly sidetracked all mention of the silver coin; but Sweeny was no fool. He kept nodding his head, standing there on spread legs, swaying to the slight roll of the vessel.

"If the insurance people are interested, there ought to be a bit o' sharing out if the coin's recovered for them," he insisted.

"I offered you a good rate for three months, no questions asked," Jock put in sharply. "I thought better o' ye, Sweeny."

Sweeny grinned, shaking his head. Gene lifted the weight of the matter with a bland smile.

"You're right, skipper, though it's a bit late in the day to bellyache after agreeing to terms. On behalf of my dad's firm, I take the responsibility of promising you a fair cut—if we recover the silver. If we only find the ship, and get nothing out of her, of course—"

"That's man fashion!" exclaimed Sweeny heartily. "A fellow never works so well as when he hopes to find something in the shape of loot."

CHAPTER XIX.

CLASH.

WHEN Sail Rock was sighted the weather had moderated a bit, but there was still sea enough to make anchoring impossible. Gene spent a lot of time with the diver, getting instructions, for he was determined to do the diving himself, at least the first descent. Judy and Aunt Kitty remained below where it was warmer; Aunt Kitty because she was finding the trip much less interesting since boarding the trawler, and Judy because the nearer they got to the scene of her bitter experience the less she wanted to see it again.

Gene was intently examining the air gear, the diver having left him for a while, when Mr. Jolly approached him looking bothered.

"There's a lot of loose talk going around this steamer," the Godiva's mate grumbled. "I don't like it. There's Benjamin and the diver and the skipper thick as thieves in the skipper's room at this moment, and I'd be there too if I liked the company. You are taking it too easy, my son."

"What's biting you?" smiled Gene, twiddling a valve. "Why don't you take it easy yourself? My business won't take long—once I can make a start. I'm not worrying."

"No, you ain't, and that's the trouble! You say you expect to lift a lot o' coin—and, by Noah's Nose! all hands are whispering treasure. They're after Benjamin about it. Why don't you come right out and tell 'em you don't expect to find anything except

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evidence of barratry? That 'd stop their silly whispering."

Gene looked up with a shrewd twinkle. "You told me yourself there was nothing wrong with the silver, Jolly. Why should I give out that there is?"

"Because I've been thinking it over, since I have had time to think in comfort. Nobody but a damned fool would believe that men would cast away a ship for the insurance while there was a tankful of dollars in her storeroom. And you know as well as anybody that the breadtank was not unsealed before the boats left."

"What is your theory now, Mr. Jolly?" Gene bent over his gear, ducking his head to a sharp volley of spray.

"Theory! I'll bet a million—well, I would if I had it—you needn't grin like that!— Who was the last man handling those bags? Benjamin! Who was Larking's right-hand man? Benjamin! Who could tell you everything right now, and save all further labor if he wasn't hoping to see Mister Perishin' Purbrick come hopping along? Benjamin!

"And here's what I think, mister: Benjamin never put them bags into the tank! He passed 'em out through the lazaret port into a boat on the other side from the wharf, and the tank was empty when the ship was murdered. That's what I think. And here we've got a crew o' men all whispering treasure, and cooking up a boiling of trouble for all hands— There's women aboard too, don't forget."

Gene got up and glanced around the leveling sea.

"I'm not worrying much about the women," he said quietly. "I'd be sorry for the man who tackled Aunt Kitty—or for the man who molested Judy while Aunt Kitty is about. But I'm glad you came to me, Jolly. I shall want all the real help I can depend upon. Benjamin could, as you say, clear up a lot; but he won't; he told me he was Larking's man, and would say nothing until he was sure it would be in Judy's interests. So I don't believe any schemers will get much change out of him. At least he's loyal to Larking's memory. He won't help anybody if he won't help me.

"But I'm sure you're wrong about the breadtank. You see I was right on top of it—almost under it once—when it came crashing across the lazaret; and take my word for it, Jolly, that tank is full of something almighty heavy. You just carry on appearing gloomy, grumble all you like, and let me know all you hear. You'll profit by any help you can give me. My father's interested in ships, and you'll need fresh employment after you've had a rest."

NIGHT came on, and still it was unsafe to anchor. The Peregrine steamed across the Straits to a sheltered cove on the main, and lay to a kedge waiting for the wind and sea to subside completely. Dawn was late at that time of the year, and when the first peep of day came Gene was on deck, anxiously scanning the weather.

He looked across towards Sail Rock, saw that the sea was smooth in its lee, then glanced all around before calling the skipper. In the north his eye caught the smudge of smoke; through the glasses he made out a fast gray steamer, with foam at her stem, heading for the Rock. He ran to call the trawler skipper.

"Get a move on! Here's something coming as if she's in a hurry!"

Before Sweeny had reached the door, Benjamin popped up from below. He saw the gray ship, and licked his lips.

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"What did I tell yer?" he squealed. "That's Rupert and Purbrick, I'll gamble on it! Might as well pack up, Selwyn—only I got to see Mister Purbrick first. Get s t a r t e d, Sweeny! What's holdin' yer?"

Nobody noticed Benjamin's assumption of authority, and of course nobody heeded it since the very hint of opposition set the whole crew into frantic motion. Not for nothing had they been whispering of treasure. Skipper and mate glanced slyly at Gene as the trawler stood across the Straits, but whatever their ultimate aim, the present one was certainly in accordance with Gene's own, and the smoke poured in a thick greasy swirl from the speeding fisherman's funnel, the foam piled about her bows.

"If yon's the owner o' th' Godiva's siller, oor trip's ower, isna it, Gene?" remarked Jock, looking puzzled.

"It would be, if he hadn't put in claim for insurance on a fishy business, Jock." Gene was studiously marking the progress of both vessels. The trawler, built for a sturdy eleven knots, was making all that; the gray vessel, apparently a fast yacht of freak type, was still in the troubled waters at the Straits' entrance, and was steaming for fifteen and making ten; but once she drew in under the lee of the land she would pull out at her full speed and steam ahead.

"I expect trouble," Gene went on, "but I intend to have first sight of that wreck. I don't care much who picks the bones afterwards."

"Ye'll ha' ta get oot an' rin, if ye expec' ta beat yon greyhound, Gene." The gray vessel was almost into the smooth water, but the trawler was punching away at her level speed, heading for a definite point indicated by Gene.

"Let her go. They only know about where the ship struck. I was in her after she reached bottom!" Gene grinned. "It'll take them an hour to locate her, even if the sun comes out and they land on the Rock. I can drop an anchor right plumb on her deck, Jock."

SURE enough, the gray steamer began to circle as she approached her mark. The Peregrine sped straight ahead. Soon the gray ship stood off, half a mile from the Sail Rock, waiting, and Gene stepped down to the trawler's welldeck to stand by the diving gear. The diver had been troublesome; it would require firmness to prevent him making that first descent, and what was more, Sweeny upheld him. As Gene reached the diving gear, some of the fishermen came about him, muttering. Jock unobtrusively packed in beside Gene. On the narrow deck below the bridge Judy appeared. Aunt Kitty stayed below.

"Better prepare to anchor bow and stern, Sweeny," Gene called out, and stooped to pick up the diving suit. Jock cried out.

"Look at that!" he exclaimed, pointing. A ragged tear ran down the diving suit from top to bottom. The diver saw it; and all suspicion was removed from him by his utterly sincere and unbridled explosion of anger. Benjamin stood right in the trawler's bows, apparently fascinated by the sight of the Rock. He turned at the diver's outburst.

"Aw, what's the row about?" he shouted. "Y' ain't goin' to do no good wiv yer silly divin', anyhow. Put me aboard that steamer, and I'll clean up the whole business in two twos. Go on, skipper, what yer stoppin' for?"

The trawler swung at Gene's direc-

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tion. He left the diving suit to the diver, and bent all his attention to bringing Sweeny over the wreck. It was not easy. He had marked the Godiva from a point high up on Sail Rock, and the bearings from the sea were quite different; but at least he had a better idea of her final position than had Purbrick, who was now easily identifiable on the gray ship's bridge. Stag Onions was there too, and Tony Pandy; though Gene had barely seen Rupert, he had no doubt that was he standing close against the bridge ladder, bundled up in cold weather clothing and looking very helpless.

"They've got a hard crowd aboard there, mister," remarked Jolly.

"You can bet they'll be hard!" yelled Benjamin, who had come aft and now stood beside the trawler's only boat.

"Tell me when the Rock bears west-nor'-west," Gene called out to Sweeny. "Steam closer in."

The bearing was brought on, and then Gene directed the skipper to steam slowly off on an east-south-east course. The gray steamer moved after her, closing in.

"Let go your anchor!" yelled Gene. "Go astern and pay out to ninety fathom, and let go the stern hook. Heave in to forty-five on the bow anchor and moor her! Hey! Look out where you're coming to!"

He shouted at the gray ship. She came on, fast, never sheering, and her sharp stem aimed straight for the Peregrine's broadside.

TO BE CONCLUDED NEXT WEEK.

Killer Hawk Caught Barehanded

DURING recent years the Signal Corps of the United States Army has lost many valuable carrier pigeons engaged in flying missions. Some of these birds have been shot down by thoughtless hunters, others have been felled in flight by hawks and other birds of prey.

Recently, Pride of Monmouth, a prize winning homer of the Fort Monmouth, N. J., loft was killed by a particularly vicious hawk which drove a trial flight of pigeons into the Army post's loft. The hawk seized Pride of Monmouth, jerked its head off and was rapidly stripping it of its skin when Sergeant M. J. Cmar, senior sergeant of the pigeon section at Fort Monmouth, entered the inclosure. Cmar grabbed a stout stick and struck the marauder. The hawk, slightly stunned, turned on the soldier and savagely attacked him, inflicting flesh wounds and cuts about the man's face, hands, and arms before Cmar could beat it unconscious. The hawk, alive and sullenly evil-tempered, is now on exhibition in close confinement at the post.

Among other famous homers in the loft at the time of Cmar's battle with the hawk were Spike and Mocker, the two surviving World War hero birds which carried messages in France for the A. E. F. Other endangered homers were Molly Pitcher, survivor of another brush with a hawk, and Florence Nightingale, a game bird which made the better part of a Lookout Mountain-Fort Monmouth pigeon marathon last spring, bleeding profusely from gunshot wounds inflicted by a careless hunter.

Herbert E. Smith.

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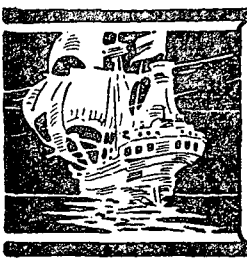

Argonotes

The Readers' Viewpoint

THE background of "The Band of Death":

"The Band of Death" is pure fiction, of course, and an author has the privilege of creating any sort of characters he likes—taking liberties with history, if he wants to, so long as he doesn't violate the laws of probability. My experience has been, however, that readers are most likely to pick on some character or incident as impossible when the character has actually been drawn from life and the incident is something that happened.

So to forestall criticism to the effect that no person elected president of a great republic could possibly be as eccentric as President Illoti, and that the government of a country like the Argentine couldn't be overturned with the lightning-like rapidity of the revolution in the story, permit me to state that the revolution of a few years ago in Buenos Aires happened in a few hours and was almost bloodless, while the actual president of the Argentine, Ippolito Irigoyen, was as fantastic a person as ever became ruler of the great country.

Illoti, of course, is a fiction character, but he was suggested by Irigoyen.

Irigoyen was a dictator who affected old clothes and professed to be too democratic to live in the palatial quarters provided for the president. He lived in a small apartment over a tobacco shop in a side street which did not possess a bathtub. Having an obsession against the telephone, he would not have one in his apartment; and messages of state were telephoned to a pay station in a bootblack establishment across the street and were delivered to him by the bootblack, who became his confidant and grew rich thereby.

Such was his prejudice against talking into the telephone that when a direct service between Buenos Aires and Washington was inaugurated four years ago, he did not use a phone but talked from his desk into a microphone several feet away to President Hoover in Washington—his words being transmitted by radio to the telephone.

Once he forgot to answer an invitation from the King of Italy to the wedding of one of the Italian princesses, and his discourtesy almost caused an international breach.

The president in my story resembles Irigoyen in these respects, but he is not supposed to be Irigoyen who, by all accounts, was a worthy man sincerely devoted to his country but who was overthrown because he had become hopelessly a back number.

And it may interest readers of "The Band of Death" to know that I have lived in Buenos Aires and admire the city and its people very much. It is a city worthy to rank with London, Paris, and New York, possessing a culture equal to that of any city. The Argentine is no more prone to revolution than France or Germany or even the United States. The Argentines resemble Americans much more than they do their Latin brethren who live in Central America and tropical

YOUR VOTE COUPON

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The stories I like best in this issue of the magazine are as follows:

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12-3

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South America and have a revolution every morning before breakfast.

FRED MACISAAC.

THE scientific basis for "Murder on the Mike":

Perhaps readers will think that the electric ear—the parabolic microphone by means of which *Craig Kennedy* spots a murderer—is an invention of my own imagination. But let me point out that the super-sensitive parabola is a scientific fact. Radio engineers have spent years perfecting this invaluable piece of apparatus, and the larger broadcasting companies have been using it for many months. By means of it, quite as though with their own ears—much better, in fact—radio owners have been listening to the hoof-beats of horses on the race track, to the bombastic speeches of politicians at great national conventions, to Olympic games and the World Series and big football matches.

The advantage of this type of "reflecting" or "focusing" microphone over the older variety is that it can be made to pick up even the faintest of sounds made at some distance from it, and to exclude sounds outside the desired area. If you will imagine a searchlight beam—but one in which the rays (comparable to sound waves) are traveling backward and are being collected in the searchlight itself—you will have grasped the principle of the thing.

Craig Kennedy, of course, uses one of these extraordinary electric ears as a kind of mechanical stool pigeon.

ARTHUR B. REEVE.

Looking Ahead!

Argosy's 50th Anniversary!

Max Brand

Returns with a great novel of the Dead Man Steer, branded with skull and crossbones and guarded from two warring cattle outfits by a lone daredevil.

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A novelette of a detective of the out trails braving the Mexican stronghold of his warned and dangerous quarry.

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Mystery on a great liner

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A Guiana convict vs. the jungle

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ELEVEN STORIES IN NEXT WEEK'S ARGOSY: 1882-1932!

9A—3

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I WILL PAY $250.00
For the Winning Answer to This Question!

I am going to give $3,500.00 to some deserving man or woman who answers my announcements. In fact, I will make someone supremely happy, just as I did when I sent Joe Walsh, a young Polish coal miner, our certified check for $3,500.00. He was given an opportunity and he took advantage of it. Now YOU have an opportunity to win $250.00 by merely writing a few words. Just answer my question—Tell me in 25 words or less how $3,500.00 would help you, and why—nothing more for you to do for this $250.00 Cash Prize! The first answer that comes to your mind right now may win. Think how $3,500.00 would help you.

..then Write me today!

No matter how plain or simple your answer may appear to you, be sure to send it right away—it may win—who knows? There is nothing more to do to win $250.00 — no "if's" or "and's" — $250.00 will absolutely be paid for the winning answer.

25 SIMPLE WORDS WIN $250.00

Rush me your answer today. Send no money—Just tell me how $3,500.00 will help you. Send your answer by letter or on a postal card — or use the convenient coupon, but by all means be sure to send it at once.

FOLLOW THESE RULES: $250.00 Cash will be paid for the answer that, in the opinion of the judges, best answers this question — "Would $3,500.00 Cash help you . . . why?" Send your answer in 25 words or less if possible. All answers must be postmarked on or before March 1, 1933. Neatness or spelling do not count. You must be 16 years of age or over. Only one answer will be accepted from a family. Just mail your answer promptly. Duplicate prizes will be awarded in case of ties. All replies become the property of Tom Wood, Manager.

HOW TO GET $100.00 CASH CERTIFICATE

I am so anxious to receive your prompt reply that I will make it worth while to rush the answer to me. Be sure your answer is mailed within 3 days after you read this announcement—sooner, if possible—so I can send a Certificate for promptness, which guarantees to pay $100.00 Cash Extra to the winner.

Sending Your Answer to My Question Promptly Qualifies You for Opportunity to

WIN $3,500.00 CASH

Or Auburn "12" Sedan and $2,000.00 Cash

This marvelous prize is extra and separate from the $250.00 Cash Prize offered for the winning answer. Think what this sum of ready cash would mean to you—yours, to spend as you like—no strings on it whatever—just YOUR money! It is easy to qualify for this opportunity to win—here is your chance. Grasp it. Send me your answer in 25 words or less. Just answer this question, "Would $3,500.00 Cash help you. Why?" Sent it today.

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Dept. M-403-P,
H. O. Building Cincinnati, Ohio

A COUPON LIKE THIS BROUGHT HIM $250.00

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• • •

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